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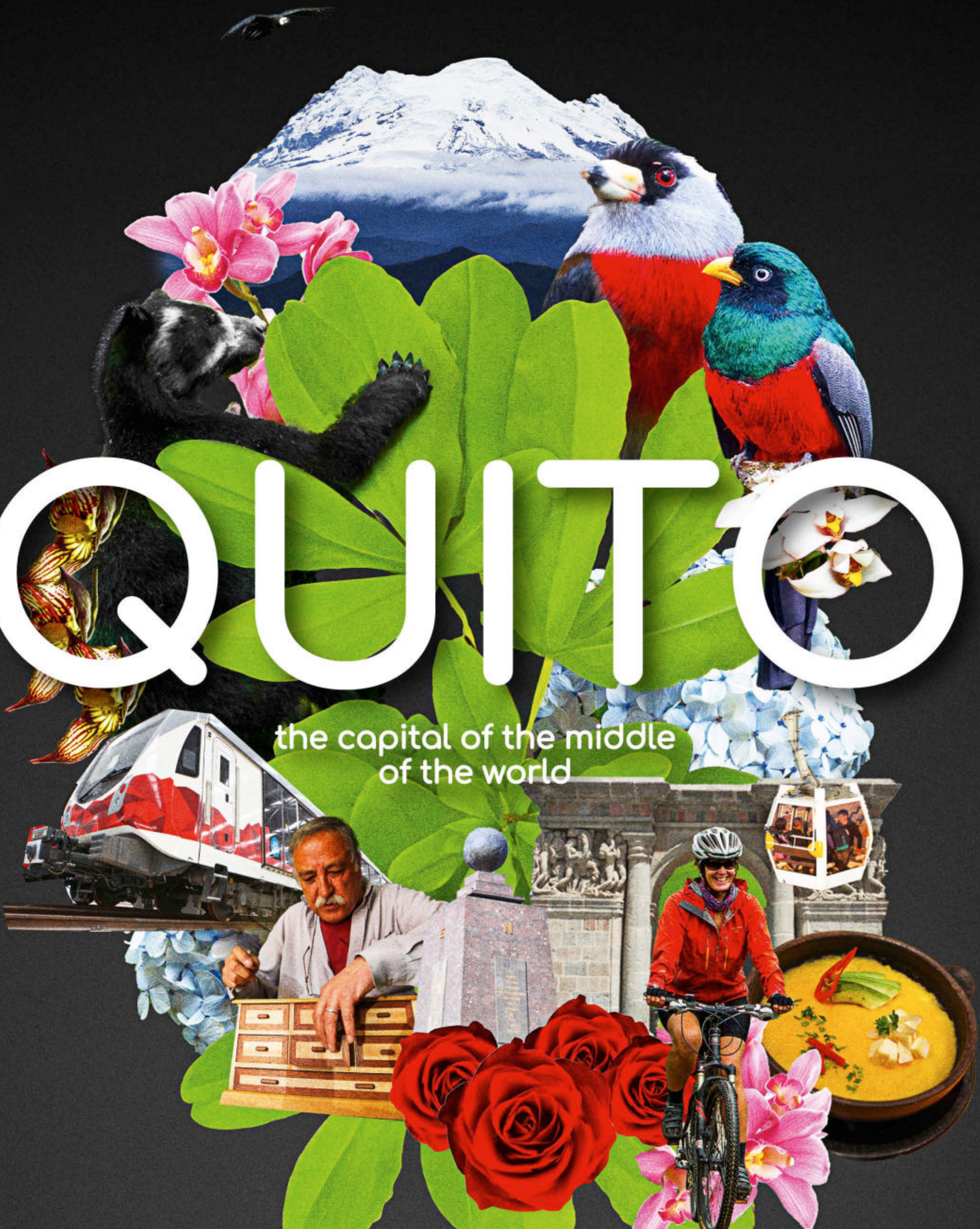

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IMAGE: YUKI SUGIURA

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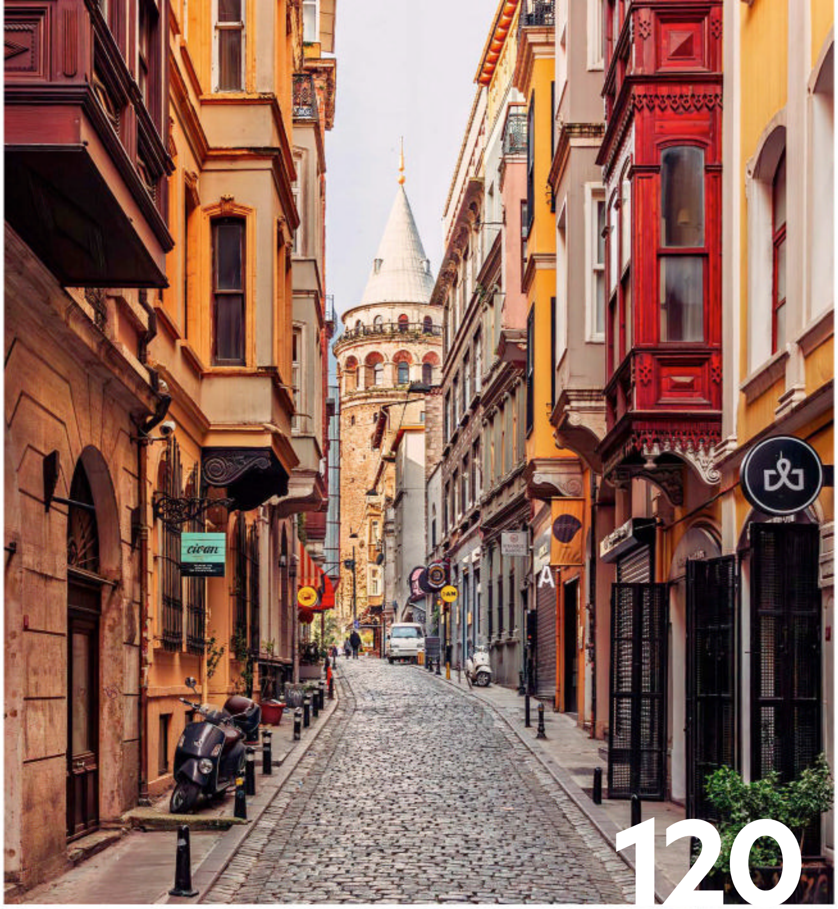

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TRAVELLER
FOOD
SEAFOOD SUMMER

Seafood platter
Image: Stockfood

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Carolyn Boyd

Across the Massif Central, I discovered incredible volcanic landscapes and learnt how locals created well-loved dishes such as aligot as a means to survive there. Equally fascinating is how today's top chefs continue these traditions, using ingredients that represent the area's terroir and its incredible biodiversity.

MASSIF CENTRAL, P 64

Jo Davey

Izakayas have long-been one of my favourite aspects of everyday Japanese life. The cuisine at these local bars is brilliantly moreish but usually unfussy and good value — certainly not somewhere I imagined conquering my life-long hatred of haute cuisine's darling ingredient: oysters.

COVER STORY, P 46

Mallika Basu

Diving into the North Indian restaurant classic butter chicken was an indulgent affair. I ate 10 versions — at restaurants, takeaways, hand-delivered, even shipped in the post. For those from further afield, I have a network of experts to thank. And my own recipe gets an unctuous upgrade.

DECONSTRUCT, P 74

Andrea Strafile

It's the smells and sounds of Naples that keep me coming back. Eating a pizza while strolling and watching the perfect chaos of this city unfold always makes feel at home — and I can't help but pull out my pen and notebook and start writing. Naples has extraordinary potential — all the scenes could be the setting for a gripping novel.

CITY BREAK, P 104

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FOOD

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Editor's letter

ISSUE 24, SUMMER 2024

Like many people who live more than an hour from the coast, I spend quite a lot of time quietly pining for it. I often find myself fantasising that the next corner I turn will lead me to the sea; or wishing my favourite cafe was perched on a harbour wall.

For me, the sounds, sights and smells of the seaside are the essence of travel — they symbolise, like nothing else, that feeling of being away. Which is perhaps why seafood is the ultimate holiday dish for me. In fact, when I stop to think about it, so many of my favourite food memories involve fish or shellfish, from eating barbecued sardines in the Algarve to enjoying a fish curry while watching the waves from a cliff edge in Kerala.

There are, of course, issues with seafood, not least those relating to overfishing and sustainability. But, while guidance on what to eat can be confusing, one clear point of consensus is that here, in the UK, our preferences are too narrow — and that fish stocks might benefit if we widened our repertoires. Fortunately, travel tends to broaden the palate; there's nothing like a stretch of unfamiliar coast to inspire us to try something new, whether it's squid, sprats, snapper or skate. In this spirit, our cover story brings together some of the world's beloved seafood specialities, from pine-smoked mussels to chilli crab.

Right, time for a spot of lionfish.

Glen

Glen Mutel, editor

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IMAGE: STEFAN MELBOURNE

WHAT'S ONLINE AT NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/TRAVEL

Best for beer
Examining Manchester's claim to be the UK's best beer city, from its historic breweries to its brew taps, micropubs and specialist bars.

Singapore specials
Exploring the city-state's diverse food culture, including Michelin-starred restaurants, hawker stalls and family-run zi char joints.

Pleasures of poitín
Ireland's once-banned spirit is enjoying a renaissance, both as a cocktail ingredient and as a distinct drink for sipping.

TRY IT NOW

Beignets

THESE DEEP-FRIED CHOUX PASTRIES ARE GLORIOUSLY MOREISH, WHETHER SWEET OR SAVOURY

Originating in France, beignets are deep-fried pastries — usually made with choux — that have become all things to all people. They can be large or small, round or square, filled or simply served with a dusting of sugar. And, as well as in their home country, they're a favourite in New Orleans, where they arrived with French colonists in the 18th century and have since become the city's sweet treat of choice.

They're seeing a surge in popularity in the UK, too, where London's Fortitude Bakehouse has gone viral on social media for its indulgent, cricket ball-sized beignets stuffed to the brim with creative fillings like lemon cheesecake cream and rhubarb jam or blueberry, maple and cardamom cream. Elsewhere in the capital, Plaquemine Lock — which specialises in Creole and Cajun food — serves its more delicate specimens with a rhubarb compote. And Claude and Lucy Bosi's new restaurant, Josephine, offers Lyonnaise 'bugnes' — deep-fried slivers of dough coated in sugar and served with a chocolate sauce.

They needn't be sweet, however. You'll find savoury iterations on menus everywhere from Ancoats, Manchester, where Elnecot's 'Wyfe of Bath beignets' come with wild garlic yoghurt, to the Isle of Skye's Edinbane Lodge, where oyster beignets are the catch of the day (read more in A Taste of Skye, p.110).

IMAGE: GETTY

It's an
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Across the pond and into paradise in Northeast Florida, the enchanting barrier island of Amelia Island invites you to sample amazing food, relax on its uncrowded beaches and indulge yourself — surrounded by live oaks draped in Spanish Moss. Just a short three-hour drive from Orlando, this is old Florida, with Southern Charm. As they say, "Come and make memories."

Ameliaisland.com

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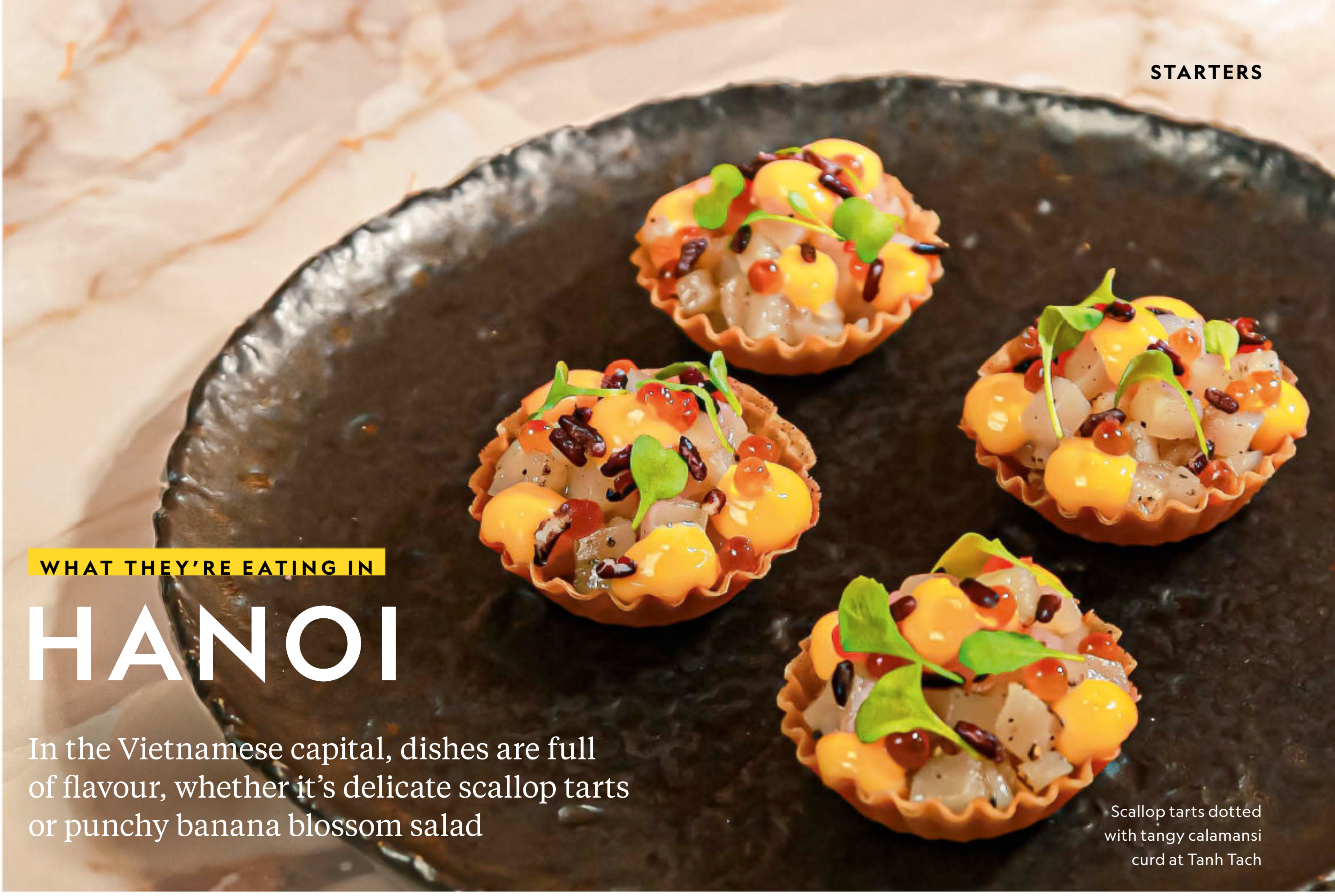


WHAT THEY'RE EATING IN

HANOI

In the Vietnamese capital, dishes are full of flavour, whether it's delicate scallop tarts or punchy banana blossom salad

Scallop tarts dotted with tangy calamansi curd at Tanh Tach

TUNG DINING

THE CARABINERO

The seasonal menus at TUNG Dining are meticulously crafted journeys. Chef Hoang Tung combines Vietnamese flavours with contemporary culinary techniques he picked up working at Michelin-starred restaurants in Finland, Denmark and Estonia. The Carabinero reflects Vietnam's affection for seafood, in this case, prawn cured in sugar and salt, topped with smoked scallop mousse. The charcoaled prawn head served alongside is stuffed with smoked trout roe and accompanied by fermented cabbage crackers. tungdining.com

TANH TACH

SCALLOP TART

The restaurant's onomatopoeic name, Tanh Tach, is Vietnamese for the clickity sound apparently made by freshly caught seafood. Chef Bernard Nguyen's menu is a celebration of these gifts from the sea, and the diverse and zesty flavours of the mon an nhe (light snacks akin to Basque pintxos) are practically a meal in themselves. The headliner is the banh tart so diep, or scallop tart, featuring velvety but sharp calamansi curd and pop-in-the-mouth red caviar. The restaurant sits within Hanoi's picturesque French Quarter, occupying a colonial villa adorned with local art. tanhtach.com

CHAPTER GRILL

STEWED TOOTHFISH

Squeeze past the kitchen team on the ground floor at Chapter before making your way up to the restaurant's dining room. Vietnam's northern mountains inspired the 13-dish summer tasting menu, which ranges from cured pork with foraged greens to black chicken with mustard leaves. The standout, however, is Patagonian toothfish with fermented soybean paste stewed in a clay pot. Chef Quang Dung learnt traditional clay-pot cooking from his grandmother, but he's added international touches here, including a soy glaze, braised green banana and guanciale (Italian cured pork). chaptergrill.vn

CHA CA THANG LONG

CHA CA

At Cha Ca Thang Long, turmeric-spiced freshwater fish is stir-fried with spring onion and dill to make the restaurant's eponymous dish, cha ca. Staff do the cooking, but you can assemble your own bowl by adding vermicelli noodles and garnishes including roasted peanuts and fresh herbs. Once limited to just a handful of traditional establishments, cha ca has experienced a boom in popularity over recent years, with a slew of competing chain outlets opening up. But the decades-old restaurants, like this Old Quarter spot, still do it best. chacathanglong.com.vn

LUK LAK

BANANA BLOSSOM SALAD

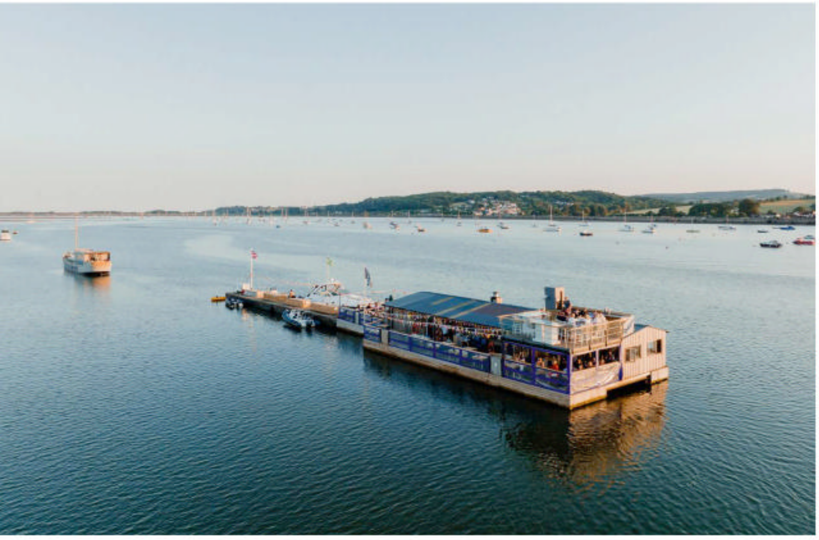
With crunchy vegetables, flavours of fresh herbs and just a few morsels of meat, Vietnamese salads are all about texture. Banana blossom salad features the pink and purple tear-shaped banana flower, shredded into a curly tangle and combined with pieces of chicken breast and other seasonal herbs and vegetables. A sprinkle of red chilli slices and a sweet and sour dressing give it a kick. Chef Binh serves the salad alongside other dishes from far-flung corners of rural Vietnam, such as smoked pork belly and fried rice with lotus seed, in a casually furnished dining room informed by Indochinese design. luklak.vn *Joshua Zukas*

IMAGE: TANH TÁCH RESTAURANT

SPOTLIGHT

Floating restaurants

FROM BRITISH CHEESE ON THE REGENT'S CANAL TO FRESHLY CAUGHT CRAB IN CORNWALL, WE ROUND UP THE UK'S BEST CULINARY EXPERIENCES ON WATER



From top: River Exe Cafe; London Shell Co; Under the Stars Bar & Kitchen

1 The Cheese Barge, London

The Cheese Bar's Paddington outpost — a 96ft double-decker barge moored on the Regent's Canal — serves up a menu of cheese dishes that change with the season: expect small plates such as tartiflette and curried cheese curds, plus The Cheese Bar's signature grilled cheese sandwiches. There's also wine from small producers such as Cramele Recas from Romania, whose Solara Orange is well worth trying. The terrace is open for al fresco dining from April to September. thecheesebar.com/paddington

2 Under the Stars Bar & Kitchen, Bristol

This floating restaurant and kitchen in Bristol Harbour specialises in Mediterranean tapas, as well as pizza and cocktails. Start the meal with an appetiser such as aged manchego with olives and red onion marmalade, before launching into delicious mains such as merguez sausage with aubergine and tomato relish, or the cumin-roasted carrots with chimichurri, feta yoghurt and dukkah. underthestarsbar.co.uk

3 London Shell Co, London

Moored on the Grand Union Canal at Paddington Basin, London Shell Co's *The Grand Duchess* is a static barge with affordable seafood lunch deals plus an array of a la carte options like fish and chips and fresh catch such as turbot, Dover sole and red mullet. Its second venue, *The Prince Regent*, is a restored wide beam canal boat that cruises along Regent's Canal from Paddington to Camden Lock and has just eight tables. londonshellco.com

4 River Exe Cafe, Exmouth, Devon

The custom-built barge specialises in serving up seafood from line to plate. It's Defra accredited, which means local fishermen are able to deliver catch directly to the restaurant. The scallops are a customer favourite, but the Neptune's platter is the star of the show — expect a selection of seafood that might include Brixham crab or local lobster. The season runs from 1 April to 30 September, and the restaurant is only accessible by boat (either a private hire or a water taxi from Exmouth Marina). riverexecafe.com

5 Blue River Table, Falmouth, Cornwall

The Tethra is a restored 36ft Cornish fishing boat that allows up to 12 guests to get their fill of the scenic creeks and rivers surrounding Falmouth. Most of the ingredients come from within a five-mile radius — order one of the sharing platters and the crab, sourced directly from local fishermen each morning. Operates from 1 May until 1 October. bluerivertable.co.uk

WORDS: KAYLEIGH RATTLE. IMAGES: BEN HARILL; HAARALA HAMILTON PHOTOGRAPHY; TIMEA DANCI PHOTOGRAPHY

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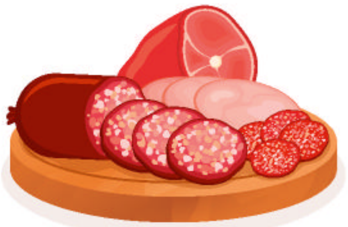
NUMBER CRUNCHING

Sandwiches

QUICK TO MAKE, EASY TO EAT ON THE GO AND ENDLESSLY ADAPTABLE – IT'S NO SURPRISE THE SANDWICH IS A UBIQUITOUS LUNCHTIME STAPLE

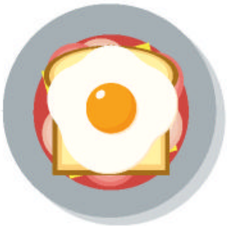


59%

THE PERCENTAGE OF UK SUPERMARKET SANDWICHES IN WHICH MEAT IS THE MAIN INGREDIENT

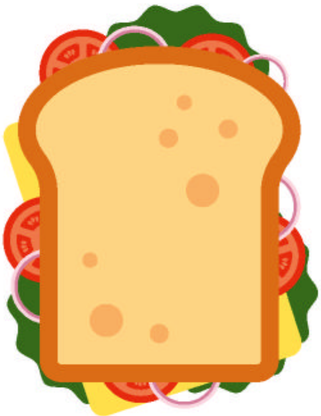
1762

The first written record of the modern sandwich, in the diary of historian Edward Gibbon. Later sources claim John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, requested it as a snack to eat while gambling



5+

THE TYPICAL NUMBER OF FILLINGS IN A PORTUGUESE FRANCESINHA: TWO TYPES OF SAUSAGE, STEAK, CHEESE AND HAM (TOPPED WITH AN EGG AND SAUCE)



18,304

The number of sandwiches the average Brit will consume in their lifetime, according to research commissioned by Heinz

$214 (£170)

The price of the world's most expensive commercially available sandwich, sold at Serendipity 3 in New York. It includes bread made with champagne, rare cheese, gold flakes and truffle butter

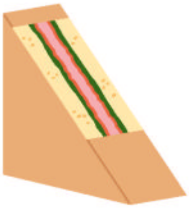
SANDWICHES

1914

THE YEAR THE 'REUBEN' IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN CREATED BY ARNOLD REUBEN AT HIS NEW YORK DELI

735 METRES

The length of the world's longest sandwich, created in Hazmieh, Lebanon in 2011. It took 22 hours to construct, and fillings included chicken, lettuce, tomato, pickles, mayonnaise, kammoun spices and coriander



1980

THE YEAR MARKS & SPENCER BEGAN SELLING PRE-PACKAGED SANDWICHES. ITS MOST POPULAR FILLING, PRAWN AND MAYONNAISE, DEBUTED IN 1981

Sources: history.com guinnessworldrecords.com eating-better.org

RESEARCH: ZUZU JAMES. IMAGES: GETTY; REGULA YSEWIJN

MAKE PERFECT

SUMMER PUDDING

This simple, flavourful dessert is packed with seasonal berries. Words: Regula Ysewijn

BACKGROUND
This dessert was all the rage in English health spas during the 19th century, when it was known as 'hydropathic pudding'. Its light casing of white bread meant it was considered a 'healthy' treat by the Victorians.

PREPARATION
To help with de-moulding, line your basin with cling film; leave enough overhanging to cover the top. To fit your bread into a classic pudding basin, cut it into trapezium shapes; if you use a cake tin you can cut it into rectangles.

BREAD
Use the best-quality white bread you can, or a homemade loaf. Factory-made bread will turn slimy because of the additives and your pudding will almost certainly be unable to hold its shape.

Find Regula's recipe for summer pudding online. nationalgeographic.com/travel

FILLING
A medley of raspberries, blackberries, redcurrants and blueberries works well, while strawberries tend to go soggy. Whether you use fresh or frozen fruit, only cook it until the sugar dissolves so the berries keep their structure.

RESTING
Once you've made your pudding, refrigerate it overnight, weighed down with a plate and a tin of something on top, so that it sits snug. Resting allows the bread to soak up the juices, turning the whole thing a deep pink colour.

SERVING
When you're ready to serve, open up the cling film, place a rimmed serving plate on top of the mould and invert. Serve with vanilla ice cream or clotted cream (or another thick cream) for indulgence, or skyr for a healthier alternative.

Regula Ysewijn is the author of Pride and Pudding (£30, Murdoch Books) and Dark Rye and Honey Cake (£26, Murdoch Books)

Nottingham's 400 Rabbits
Left: Margaritas at Cantina OK!
Below left: Hacha Brixton

THE DRINK

Pinch of salt

A TRUE CLASSIC, THE MARGARITA IS A GREAT GATEWAY INTO AGAVE SPIRITS. WORDS: THE THINKING DRINKERS

What's the best way to enjoy tequila?
Have it in a margarita. It's a stone-cold tequila (and mezcal) classic. What's more, it's a superb sip for summer, it's simple to make and easy to drink — even if you're unsure about agave spirits. You need, however, to let them into your life — they were the only spirits to see a rise in UK sales last year.

Sounds good. What is it?
The margarita is a tequila twist on a sour, a sidecar or a daisy, all of which comprise a base spirit, an acidic component (lemon, lime) and a sweet ingredient (liqueur). The first written recipe, in a 1953 issue of *Esquire*, recommended an ounce of tequila, a dash of triple sec and lime or lemon juice. Purists argue that, aside from a salt rim, a true margarita shouldn't veer away from this core trio. In this, its most classic form, it's served either on the rocks, straight up or frozen.

Who invented it?
Well, several bars either side of the Mexican-US border claim it. Some say it was created in Texas in homage to either Rita Hayworth (real name Margarita Cansino) or Peggy (Margaret) Lee in the 1940s. Another tale names Texan socialite Margaret 'Margarita' Sames who, while in Acapulco, mixed tequila with Cointreau before adding lime and a salt rim. Then there's bartender Carlos 'Danny' Herrera, who claimed he created it at a Tijuana roadside restaurant for a dancer named Marjorie.

Are there variations?
Plenty. Alternative ingredients range from chilli and amaretto to Chartreuse. The Tommy's margarita, however, is the most iconic twist. Created in Tommy's Mexican Restaurant in San Francisco in the late 1980s by owner Julio Bermejo, it uses agave syrup instead of triple sec and is served on the rocks.

THE COCKTAIL

Margarita

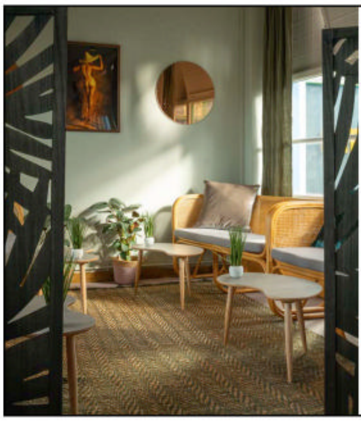
Agave spirits expert Jesse Estes's recipe for the "perfect margarita".

INGREDIENTS

50ml Ocho Blanco tequila
25ml Pierre Ferrand dry curaçao
25ml freshly squeezed lime juice
Lime wedge (optional)

METHOD

Shake all ingredients vigorously in a cocktail shaker before double straining (running the mix through two strainers) into a rocks glass half-rimmed with salt, over cubed ice. Garnish with a lime wedge, if you like.



WHERE TO DRINK IT

Hacha, London

This awesome agaveria in Brixton Village is the spiritual home of the sensational mirror margarita. Designed by owner Deano Moncrieffe, it's entirely see-through and made with the oils of red, white and pink grapefruit. hachabar.com

400 Rabbits, Nottingham

Mayahuel, the Aztec goddess of the agave plant and inspiration for this cracking cocktail burrow, was said to have birthed a brood of intoxicated rabbits. Expect fun times, knowledgeable staff and great drinks at reasonable prices. fourhundredrabbits.co.uk

Cantina OK!, Sydney

It's all about the agave at this tiny, 20-person, hole-in-the-wall bar in the very centre of Sydney. Its legendary margaritas are made with hand-sourced tequilas and mezcals, hand-shaved ice and fresh hand-pressed lime juice. okokok.com.au

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MEET THE MAKER

DIG IN

In the Peruvian Andes, Manuel Choqque Bravo has cultivated hundreds of hybrid varieties of tuber, including what he calls 'super potatoes'

From left: Manuel Choqque Bravo in his field; Manuel's tubers are sought after by Peru's top chefs

"The potato was a sacred food for the Incas," says Manuel Choqque Bravo, in a lilting accent characteristic of Peru's Andean highlands. "For me and my family, it's been important to rescue this ancestral knowledge and these varieties of potatoes."

Hailing from Huatata, a town near Cusco, Manuel is a fourth-generation farmer, an agricultural engineer and a so-called potato whisperer. Working alongside his family, he manually cross-pollinates the vegetable to breed deeply pigmented varieties with impressive levels of minerals, vitamins and antioxidants. He's cultivated more than 380 distinct hybrid varieties of tuber, including his signature ruby-red, indigo, amethyst and marigold potatoes.

"Today, we have a super potato that has 10 times as many antioxidants as a blueberry, five times as much vitamin C as citrus, high levels of iron and zinc, and two types of proteins," he says. "We're breaking the myths about what a potato is or can be. A papa nativa [Peruvian native potato] can be a superfood."

Manuel's efforts have earned him the respect of Peru's culinary elite, with chefs from restaurants such as Central and Mérito (both in Lima) hailing his potatoes. Yet, he didn't always foresee this life for himself, having first studied law at university before later switching to agricultural engineering. "I was quite young. Then, after all those years of intense scientific learning, I came home because I felt I was missing something. I felt that I had to do something with the potato."

Today, Manuel also produces a fermented 'wine' made from oca, another type of tuber commonly referred to as a potato. He began experimenting with potato 'wines' in 2013, bottling his first attempts under the brand name Miskioca, and has just launched his second brand, Oxalis, which features red, white and rosé expressions.

Next, Manuel is turning his eye towards cultivating hardier, more resistant varieties of potato in response to the ways in which the Andean countryside is increasingly affected by climate change.

"Years ago, it was the lack of demand we were most concerned about," he explains, "but now it's a lack of production due to inconsistent rainfall. At some point, I'm going to have to start breeding hybrids that are resistant to these abrupt changes — droughts, frosts and the like. I feel that's my calling."

Visits with Manuel Choqque Bravo can be arranged via tour operator Peru Well Served. peruwellserved.com *Catherine Tansey*

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Mérito, Lima
At this compact restaurant, celebrated chef Juan Luis Martínez uses Miguel's potatoes in dishes such as papa rellena (stuffed potato). meritorestaurante.com

MIL, Maras
At Virgilio Martínez's second outpost in Peru, three varieties of Manuel's potatoes take centre stage in the Ande Central dish, a play on traditional Andean earthen-oven cooking. milcentro.pe

La Niña, Lima
Located in trendy Miraflores, La Niña has three varieties of Manuel's fermented potato 'wine' on the menu. laninarestaurante.com

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FIVE WAYS WITH

Mangoes

WHEN PICKED IN ITS PRIME, THE TROPICAL FRUIT PAIRS WITH A HOST OF FLAVOURS. WORDS: ANDY OLIVER

A ripe mango is a beautiful thing — honey sweet, but with enough acidity to keep things interesting, a velvety texture and a heady perfume. As tropical fruits go, it's a real big hitter.

It comes in many varieties — from India's fragrant alphonso to southern Thai small horse mangoes — and whether eaten sweet and ripe or green (underripe, crunchy and sour), it's one of those ingredients that has magical affinities with other flavours. For me, sweet mango and fresh, sweet salty coconut cream scented with pandan leaf, or sour mango with dry, fermented or crispy seafood are combinations on a par with strawberries and cream.

Mangoes are seasonal, and while you can find sweet ones all year round, if you want the best, it's worth finding out when they're in their prime. The season can vary somewhat from year to year, but for most mangoes grown in the Northern Hemisphere, the best ripen between May and September. Out of season, I'd encourage you to explore the joys of a crunchy sour green mango, dipped in salt and chilli or folded into Thai relishes and Indian chutneys. Here are five more ways to make the most of them.

Andy Oliver is chef owner of Som Saa and Kolae in London. somsaa.com kolae.com

1 Savoury snack Try pounding a few pan-roasted dry chillies together with a big pinch of sea salt and a little sugar. Use it as a dip for slices of tart, crunchy green mango.

2 Thai salad Combine shredded green mango, shallots, bird's eye chillies and a dressing of lime juice, fish sauce and a little sugar to make a Thai-style salad. Serve with deep-fried fish.

3 Pickled Clean and chop sour or semi-sour green mangoes, then salt-ferment the pieces in a simple brine for three to four days. Add them to curries, relishes or rich braised dishes.

4 Relish Jazz up diced semi-ripe mango with a pinch of salt, a squeeze of lime, chopped fresh chilli, spring onions and coriander. Enjoy with barbecued pork, chicken or salmon.

5 Custard Mix 70g pureed fresh mango with 70g coconut cream, 70g palm sugar and two medium eggs. Whisk, pass through a sieve and steam gently in a heatproof bowl until just set.

IMAGE: STOCKFOOD

WINE

IN THE PINK

Often overlooked, sparkling rosé is a fun alternative to standard fizz that makes for some terrific food pairings. Words: Fiona Beckett

Given that rosé and sparkling are two of the most popular wine styles, you'd think the combination of the two would be a real crowd-pleaser. But, while its popularity is on the rise, sparkling rosé still only sells a sixth of the amount of standard fizz, according to figures from retailer Majestic Wine.

Across the wine world, attitudes to pink fizz vary. In the case of the most famous rosé-producing region, Provence, I suspect the preference for still wine is due to the fact that you often have to add extra sugar to sparkling wine, whereas Provence rosé is usually bone dry. In the Prosecco region, by contrast, a dash of pinot noir adds an appealingly fruity note to what can be a bit of a dull drink.

This, by the way, is often how pink fizz is made — by adding red wine to a still wine base then creating the bubbles in the usual way, which, in the case of champagne and similar, champagne-style wines, means undergoing a secondary fermentation in the bottle. In fact, sometimes the producer will simply leave the juice in contact with dark-skinned grape skins.

Prices can vary considerably, depending on the quality of the wine, how long it's aged and the reputation of the house. Of course, supermarket own-label champagne is usually much cheaper than 'grand marques' like Billecart-Salmon, Laurent-Perrier and Ruinart.

Often, a rosé sparkler commands a premium over the equivalent non-rosé fizz in a producer's range. That might initially seem hard to justify, but the reason appears to be that it's a more expensive process. English producer Black Chalk makes a lovely, delicate rosé, which, according to its chief executive and winemaker Jacob Leadley, requires their best pinot. "The clones [of the vines] are managed to produce fruit that's full of the red fruit aromas and flavours we need for the Wild Rosé," he explains. "It needs a lot more work in the winery." That said, I suspect some producers charge more simply because they can — Dom Pérignon Rosé costs around £350, for example, compared to £200 for a standard bottle.

The other thing that makes sparkling rosé an interesting drink is its strength as a food wine. Vintage rosé champagnes are often served with red meat at gastronomic dinners — they make a great show-off pairing with raw beef dishes like steak tartare and carpaccio or with rare veal or lamb, not to mention a spectacular all-pink colour combination with grilled lobster.

Ultimately, though, there's something wonderfully playful about pink fizz and maybe none more so than the latest recruit to the category — pet nat, or pétillant naturel. It's a fashionable style of natural wine that's bottled after a few months rather than aged for years — and, in the case of rosé, the results are fresh, fruity and just perfect for a sunny afternoon.

FIVE TO TRY

Adnams Pinot Noir Fizz Rosé

I'm not sure how indie wine merchant Adnams manages to sell this fabulously fruity French rosé at a prosecco price, but it's actually a lot nicer — and drier — than most prosecco. Fun label, too. A brilliant summer party or picnic fizz. £8.99. adnams.co.uk

Cava Vilarnau Brut Rosé Reserva 2020

An impressive sparkling rosado, as the Spanish call it, in a wonderfully elaborate bottle. This full-bodied pink fizz would pair well with robustly flavoured tapas, such as gambas al ajillo (garlicky prawns). £13.99. majestic.co.uk

BLACK CHALK

Black Chalk Wild Rose 2020

Anyone who doubts that England can come up with champagne-quality wine should taste this raspberry-scented pink fizz from one of the UK's most exciting young producers, Black Chalk. Sip with smoked salmon canapes. £43. thewinesociety.com

Moussamoussettes 2021 Rene Mosse

It's hard to think of a more joyous, exuberant expression of summer than this pétillant naturel, or pet nat. Fizzy, hazy, bursting with rhubarb and red berry fruit, it's pure happy juice. The ideal drink for a summer's day by the sea. £24.95. lescaves.co.uk

Devaux 'Oeil de Perdrix' Rosé Champagne

The name refers to the delicate shade of pink around the rim of a partridge's eye. A pretty champagne with some delicious red berry fruit that you could drink with food — salmon maybe. £29.99. majestic.co.uk

IMAGES: ADNAMS; BLACK CHALK

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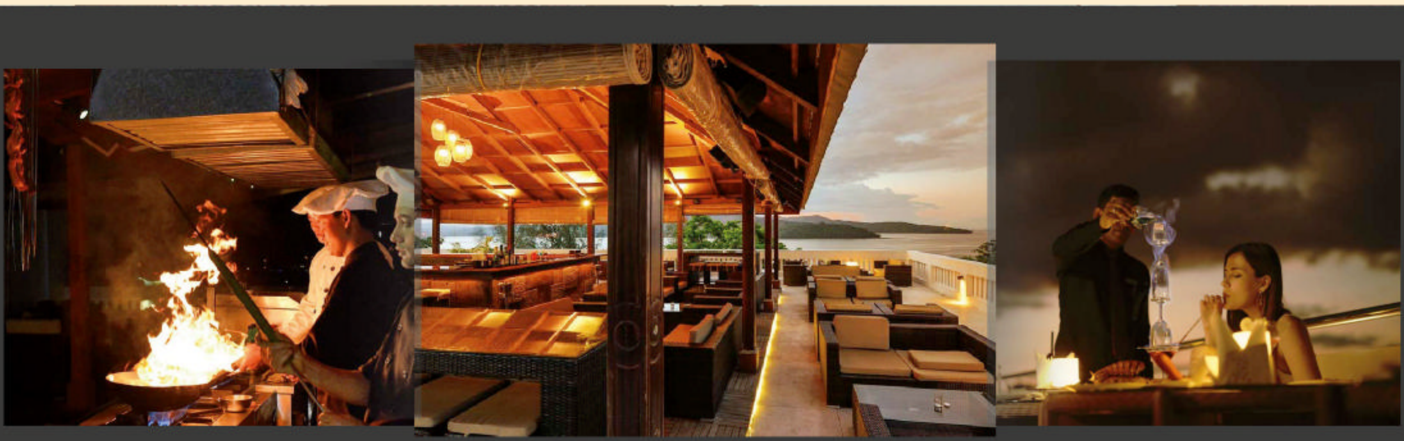

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ASK THE EXPERTS

TRINIDAD

From finding the best Trini breakfast in Port of Spain to a guide to making your own doubles, here's how to taste the best of the island

THE EXPERTS

Franka Philip
Food writer and media consultant

Natasha Laggan
Founder of Trini Cooking with Natasha

Ria Birju
Founder of Cooking With Ria

Lonely Beach in Balandra

Where can you recommend for a memorable dining experience in Trinidad?

FRANKA PHILIP: The island's mix of races and cultures makes it a truly exciting culinary getaway. That said, you're unlikely to find many totally 'local' gourmet restaurants as Trinis tend to seek something different if they're dining out. In addition, the influx of Venezuelan, Chinese and Middle Eastern immigrants in recent years has given the local food scene a more international vibe.

For a hearty Trini breakfast in Port of Spain, the capital, head to Mano's on Park Street. Expect delicious classics like saltfish buljol, tomato choka, fried aloo (potatoes) and curried channa in a bustling, no-frills setting. A morning meal here is a must.

For one of the best lunches in town, take a scenic drive to Balandra, on the north-east coast of the island, where you'll find Seaside Flames Under D Pot. This family-run restaurant has a welcoming, rustic vibe and most of the produce comes from local farmers and fishermen. Owner Anisa does an excellent job of maximising the vibrant flavours of herbs and spices that are central to Trini cuisine, like chadon beni, Spanish thyme and bay leaf. Don't leave without trying the curry crayfish and dumplings.

In Pointe-a-Pierre, in southern Trinidad, you'll find one of the most special dining experiences on the island. Restaurant Freebird is situated in a nature reserve bounded by a defunct oil refinery. There, sister-and-brother team Rhea and Rhenard push boundaries with an imaginative menu driven by produce and seasonality. It takes a daring chef to cook lionfish, the venomous, spiny, invasive fish that poses a threat to local marine life, and at Freebird, Rhea and Rhenard have created an absolutely divine lionfish aguachile. instagram.com/freebirdtt

IMAGE: ALAMY

Can you suggest any culinary walking tours on the island?
NATASHA LAGGAN: To get a taste of the island's best flavours, book a tour with Foodie Tales with Zaak (instagram.com/foodietaleswithzaak). On its popular Doll's Chulha Curry Experience Tour, in southern Trinidad, you'll start with a refreshing cup of chow (fresh fruit slices seasoned with salt, pepper and herbs) at Central Chow Master in Carapichaima. Next, a trip to Doll's Chulha in Fyzabad for a dirt oven breakfast — a sandwich where the raw dough is stuffed with cooked meat or vegetables and baked in a 'dirt' (clay) oven. Here, you can also sample hot pholourie (spicy fried split pea and flour dough balls, pictured above) and mango chutney, as well as curry duck and chicken, curry channa and potato, murtani (a pepper condiment) and mango talkari (a sweet-and-tart side dish), all served with dhalpuri or paratha (types of flatbread).

Also from Foodie Tales with Zaak, the Toco Foodie Lovers Tour focuses on the northeastern village of Toco. At Pine Man On D Corner, try treats like pineapple and mango chow with salt prunes; at Figaro's Deli, get a sample box of sweet treats such as pone (cassava cake), fudge, paimie (cornmeal pie) and kurma (ginger-spiced dough snacks); and at Liz's Delights, try a hot pholourie with tamarind chutney.

Trinidad Food Tours is another good option. It hosts a range of tours, including Best of Port of Spain Food Tour, where you'll learn about the capital's fascinating history while tucking into its street food; Saturday Markets Food Tour, which takes in local markets; and Friday Night Bites, which ends at a popular local bar. trinidadfoodtours.com

What's a good recipe for doubles?
RIA BIRJU: Doubles is a popular street food in Trinidad. It consists of two soft baras (flatbreads) filled with channa (chickpeas). This recipe includes culantro, a popular herb in the Caribbean. If you can't find it, coriander is the best substitute. Amchar masala can be purchased on Amazon or substituted with more ground roasted cumin.

SERVES: 8 **TAKES: 2 HRS PLUS RESTING**

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CHANNA
230g dried chickpeas
¾ tsp baking soda
30g yellow split peas (optional)
1/8 tsp turmeric
1 tbsp minced culantro plus 1 tbsp finely chopped culantro
1 tbsp minced garlic
½ tsp amchar masala (optional)
½ tsp ground roasted cumin
1-2 tsp salt, or to taste

FOR THE BARA
240g plain flour
½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 tsp fast-action dried yeast
pinch of turmeric
2 tsp sugar
475ml vegetable oil, plus 1 tbsp

FOR THE CHUTNEY
1 bunch culantro
4 cloves garlic
scotch bonnet or habanero pepper

METHOD

① For the channa, put the chickpeas in a bowl, cover with several inches of water and add ½ tsp of the baking soda. Soak overnight.

② The next day, start on the bara. Combine the flour, baking powder, salt, yeast, turmeric and sugar in a medium bowl. Gradually add 190ml water and mix to form a soft, slightly sticky dough (avoid over-kneading). Rub the dough with the oil and cover with cling film. Allow to rest for at least 1 hr, but ideally 6 hrs.

③ Divide the dough into 16 small balls, each weighing around 35g. Cover and allow to rise for 1 hr more, or until doubled in size.

④ Meanwhile, drain the chickpeas and rinse multiple times, then drain a final time. Fill a saucepan with 1.5 litres water and set over a medium heat. Add the chickpeas, yellow split peas (if using), salt and the remaining ¼ tsp baking soda. Stir to combine, then bring to a boil and skim off any impurities that rise to the surface. Reduce heat to low and cook for around 1 hr until the chickpeas are tender.

⑤ In the meantime, make the chutney. Put all the ingredients in a blender with enough water to create a pourable consistency and pulse. Season with salt to taste. Set aside.

⑥ Once the chickpeas are cooked, add the turmeric, minced culantro and garlic and mix thoroughly. Cook for 15-20 mins more, or until the chickpeas reach desired softness. Keep the pan on the heat and use a wooden spoon to stir in a back-and-forth motion for several minutes to bring the mixture to the ideal consistency (it'll thicken as it cools — if it thickens too much, add enough water to make a pourable consistency and cook until warm). Season with salt to taste. Mix in the chopped culantro, amchar masala (if using) and ground roasted cumin to finish. Set aside.

⑦ Return to the dough. Heat 475ml of the oil in a narrow pot set over a high heat. Put a ball of dough on an oiled surface or plate and flatten it into a 15cm round, or until almost transparent. Once the oil is very hot, carefully place the flattened dough into the hot oil and fry each side until cooked and lightly golden-brown (this should take mere seconds if the oil is sufficiently hot). Use a slotted spoon to drain the bara on the side of the pot, removing excess oil, then place on kitchen paper or a tea towel in a container or pot with a tight lid. Seal the container to keep the bara warm. Repeat with the remaining dough balls, layering and wrapping them in the kitchen paper or towel as they're completed — this will allow them to achieve the desired soft, chewy texture.

⑧ To assemble the doubles, place eight of the hot baras on a serving plate and top with the channa and chutney. Top each one with a second bara to form eight sloppy sandwiches, then serve.

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK; COOKINGWITHRIA.COM

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MY LIFE IN FOOD

HUGH DENNIS

The comedian and actor on Vietnamese food, the joys of injera in Ethiopia and barbecued meat in the hills of Italy

My mum was way ahead of the curve in terms of healthy food. This was in the 1960s, and she'd make her own yoghurt and grow mung beans in the airing cupboard. She'd read an article about how cabbage was fantastic for you and cooked it every day — it took my dad 45 years to tell her he didn't like cabbage. But when I think of my parents, weirdly, the thing I remember most is cheese on toast — I used to have it almost every lunchtime. The other one is Sunday roast. My dad was a vicar, so Sunday lunch was a very big thing for us.

I lived on cream cheese and crackers for four days while travelling across Canada. I was 19 and on the Canadian Pacific Railway. For some reason, I thought the train would stop and I'd be able to get food, but about 15 minutes before the journey, I realised that wasn't the case. We couldn't afford to eat in the restaurant car, so we rushed to the supermarket and panic bought Philadelphia cheese and crackers. I did a lot of travelling in my early twenties when I had no money at all, but I was determined to do it.

Every year, I go to the same restaurant on the borders of Umbria and Tuscany. It's called La Miniera di Galparino, near Città di Castello. In the 1970s or '80s, Italians encouraged farms to become restaurants and take in staying guests. We don't stay there, but after playing football — something we've been doing for 21 years now — we have a seven-course meal before going to the airport. They're among the best meals I've ever had. They do a shredded pork that's just out of this world.

I once had beautifully cooked meat in the hills of San Gimignano. It was almost like a food festival at night with amazing pasta dishes and barbecued meats. I was a student, and that was the exact moment I fell in love with Italian food. It's the lack of complication for me. When I travelled around Ethiopia for the BBC, I drove from Addis Ababa to Aksum, where they think they have the Ark of the Covenant. Because the country was ruled by Italians for a few years, you can get spaghetti and tomato sauce everywhere you go. It's such an odd thing. There was great local food, too, like injera.

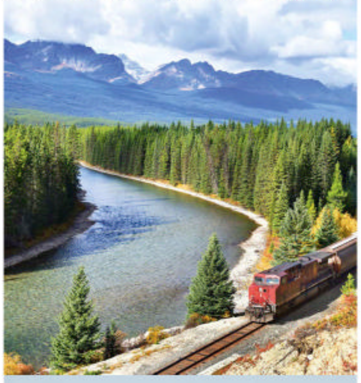
I'd love to go to Vietnam. I've really enjoyed the food I've had in Vietnamese restaurants over the years. I haven't travelled that much in Asia, but I've been to Cambodia and Laos, and the influence there, for example French coffee and pastries, is really interesting and seems like an unusual thing. I also think Japan is amazing — I love ramen and sashimi.

I recently went to Afghan Kitchen on Islington Green in London — the food's incredibly tasty. You only get a choice of five or six things, but it's all beautifully presented, and you just sit and chat with friends over lamb and potatoes. We treated it a bit like tapas, and it seemed to be fish with potatoes, lamb with potatoes and… more potatoes. There were also these flatbreads and dips and chutneys, and lovely Afghan curry, too, which was quite hot.

Rhubarb is genuinely awful. I was sort of force-fed it as a child because it's really good for you. But my mum never served it with sugar, so it was very sour and I never got over that. Quite often you might get an apple and rhubarb crumble at someone's house and I think, 'oh no, I'm going to have to eat it'.

I wouldn't want Genghis Khan or Napoleon at my dream dinner party. For a start, they don't know each other and it'd be really awkward. Dinner parties are about who you're with and where you are as much as they're about the food. Plus, can you imagine cooking for Napoleon? For me, my dream guests will always be my wife and children.

The Punt & Dennis: We Are Not A Robot UK tour runs until 26 June. Interview: Farida Zeynalova



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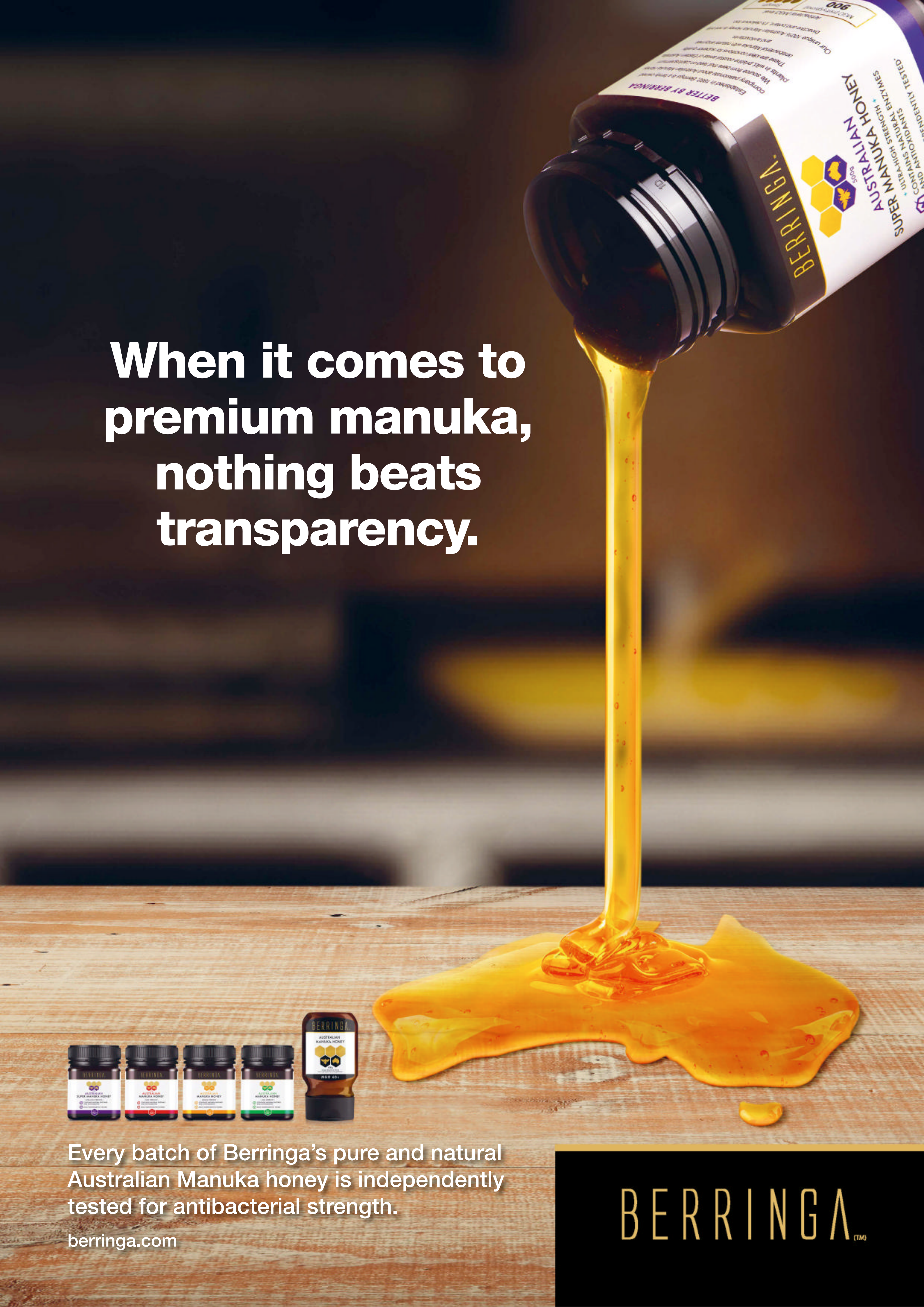

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RECIPE JOURNAL

Seeing red

THE WORLD'S MOST COMMONLY GROWN 'VEGETABLE' IS THE CORNERSTONE OF COUNTLESS CUISINES AND THE STAR OF SOUPS, SALADS, SALSAS AND SO MUCH MORE. WORDS: CHRISTIE DIETZ

Platter of heirloom and cherry tomatoes

Tomatoes — those smooth-skinned berries we prepare and cook as vegetables — are an indispensable cooking ingredient the world over. They originated in the Andes — first cultivated by the Incas and Aztecs — and were brought to Europe in the 16th century by Spanish conquistadors. Today, they're enjoyed everywhere from China to Cameroon, but are particularly indispensable within the cuisines of countries whose warm, sunny climates provide optimal growing conditions.

Deliciously juicy eaten ripe and raw, and an intensely flavoured ingredient when sun-dried or tinned, tomatoes are as commonly used fresh in salads and salsas as they are cooked in soups and stews. They're an essential component in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes, including Turkish menemen, in which eggs are scrambled with tomatoes and green peppers, and Iranian Shirazi salad, where they're combined, fresh and chopped, with cucumber, onion and herbs. Closer to their place of origin, tomatoes are widely used in Mexican dishes such as pico de gallo and fiery Yucatán tomato sauce.

Across the globe, there are thousands of varieties, which come in countless colours, shapes and sizes. Small, sweet cherry tomatoes are great for roasting or eating as they are, whereas dense plum tomatoes, which have fewer seeds, are ideal for sauces. Tuck slices of mellow beef tomatoes into burgers, or hollow whole ones out and stuff and bake them. For maximum flavour, seek out smooth, firm fruits that are aromatic and still attached to the vine. British tomatoes are in season from June to October; in winter, good-quality tinned tomatoes are a more flavourful option than watery fresh ones. In general, store tomatoes at room temperature (cool temperatures degrade their flavour and texture) and mature unripe tomatoes in a brown paper bag or turn them into chutney. Preserves, marinades, fritters, curries — they can be made into almost anything.

IMAGE: GETTY

The torta ahogada ('drowned sandwich') was invented in Guadalajara, Mexico in the early 1900s when a street vendor was said to have dropped a sandwich into a container of salsa. Today, it's available throughout the state of Jalisco. A tomato-based version is sometimes offered as an alternative to the usual chile de árbol-based sauce; this recipe incorporates both. Birotes are long, crusty sourdough rolls, but a chunk of baguette is a good substitute.

Drowned sandwich by Virgilio Martinez

SERVES: 4 **TAKES: 3 HRS PLUS 15 MINS SOAKING**

INGREDIENTS

675g pork shoulder
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 bay leaf
1 red onion, halved and thinly sliced into half-moons
1 lime, juiced
4 birote rolls (or hunks of baguette)
4 tbsp coriander leaves, finely chopped
lime wedges, to serve

FOR THE SPICY SAUCE

15g dried arbol chillies
2 garlic cloves, chopped
2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
30g toasted sesame seeds
1 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp ground cumin

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE

900g tomatoes
¼ tsp ground cumin
½ white onion, chopped
1 tsp dried oregano
1 garlic clove, chopped
1 tbsp olive oil

METHOD

1 Heat oven to 180C, fan 160C, gas 4. Season the pork with the garlic and some salt and pepper, then put in a roasting pan. Add the bay leaf and 250ml water to the bottom of the pan and cook in the oven for 2 hrs, turning the meat over after 1 hr; it's ready when a knife inserted in the middle comes out warm. Remove and let cool until warm, then shred the meat and set aside.

2 To make the spicy sauce, put the chillies in a bowl with 250ml hot water and leave to soak for 15 mins. Drain, then transfer the chillies to a blender and add the garlic, vinegar, sesame seeds, oregano and cumin. Season with salt and pepper and blend until smooth. Strain the mixture, reserving the liquid sauce.

3 For the tomato sauce, boil the tomatoes in a pan of water for 10 mins, then drain and peel. Clean the blender, then tip in the peeled tomatoes, cumin, onion, oregano and garlic and blend to a paste. Heat the oil in a medium pan, then add the tomato mix and cook for 20 mins, letting some of the liquid evaporate and stirring continuously so it doesn't stick.

4 Season the red onion with the lime juice and some salt and leave for 5 mins.

5 Cut open the bread, add some of the shredded meat and top with the onion. Pour some of the tomato sauce over the bread, then add the spicy sauce and sprinkle over the coriander. Serve warm with lime wedges.

From The Latin American Cookbook by Virgilio Martinez (Phaidon, £35)

IMAGES: JIMENA AGOIS; MARTIN POOLE

This is a simple-looking Burmese salad with bold, complex flavours. The sweetness and natural acidity of the fresh tomatoes is balanced by the salty fish sauce and dried shrimp, the nutty toasted chickpea flour, the heat of the chilli and the sour lime juice to create layers of deep savouriness; the peanuts and fried shallots add a welcome crunch. It's best prepared fresh on the day of serving, using the freshest, highest-quality tomatoes you can find. Serve with rice, or as a side to a Burmese curry. The ingredient list includes garlic oil and crispy fried shallots — recipes for both are included in the cookbook *The Rangoon Sisters*, although shop-bought versions can be used. To make this dish vegetarian, omit the fish sauce and season with salt.

Khayan jin thee thoke (Tomato and crunchy peanut salad)
by Amy and Emily Chung

SERVES: 4 AS A SIDE

TAKES: 10 MINS

INGREDIENTS

1 tsp gram flour

50g unsalted roasted peanuts

300g tomatoes, at room temperature, quartered

1/2 green finger chilli, deseeded (optional) and finely sliced

1 tbsp dried shrimps (optional)

1-2 raw shallots, peeled and thinly sliced

3-5 tbsp garlic oil

½ lime, juiced

2 tsp fish sauce (if making a vegetarian version, season with salt instead)

small handful of coriander leaves

crispy fried shallots (shop-bought or homemade), to garnish

METHOD

1 Sift the gram flour into a bowl. Heat a frying pan over a low-medium heat and add the gram flour. Stir it around so it's distributed evenly across the pan, then continue to stir intermittently to ensure even toasting. Cook until it begins to smell a little nutty and browns slightly, around 5 mins — it may clump a little, which is normal; you can always re-sift it if it's particularly clumpy. Set aside. You can save any leftover toasted gram flour for use in other recipes; it'll keep for 3 months in an airtight container.

2 Crush the peanuts using a pestle and mortar or pulse a few times in a food processor (to the size of the nubs you get in shop-bought crunchy peanut butter).

3 Put the crushed peanuts, 1 tsp of the toasted gram flour and the remaining ingredients, bar the shallots, in a large bowl and mix (ideally using your hands) to fully combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more fish sauce or chilli if necessary.

4 Transfer to a serving dish and garnish with the crispy fried shallots.

From The Rangoon Sisters by Amy and Emily Chung (Ebury Press, £20)

Pomodori col riso is a classic Roman dish that's very popular in summer, and a traditional Passover dish for Italian Jews. The tomatoes — their insides scooped out and replaced with risotto rice — are baked on a tray of cubed potatoes until they're swollen and collapsing, while the potatoes are crispy, creamy and golden. Best served warm or at room temperature, it's a great make-ahead option or picnic dish, but it's important to use juicy tomatoes that aren't too soft so that they hold their shape as they cook. The mozzarella here is a delicious but non-traditional addition and can be omitted for vegans.

Pomodori col riso (Stuffed tomatoes with roasted potatoes) by Olivia Cavalli

SERVES: 4 **TAKES: 1 HR 45 MINS PLUS 1 HR 30 MINS RESTING**

INGREDIENTS

- 8 medium-large tomatoes, such as beef tomatoes (see recipe introduction)
- 8 tbsp risotto rice
- 90ml extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for the dish and for drizzling
- 2 heaped tbsp chopped parsley leaves
- 10 basil leaves, finely sliced
- 70g pecorino romano, finely grated
- ¼ tsp sugar
- 1 fat or 2 small garlic clove(s)
- 800g baking potatoes (peeled weight), peeled and cut into 1.5cm cubes
- 60g mozzarella, chopped into small pieces (optional)

METHOD

① Slice the tops off the tomatoes and reserve for use later. Use a spoon to scoop out the insides into a bowl, leaving a hollow shell. If you have a high-speed blender, transfer the insides to it and blend (seeds and all) until completely smooth; if you don't have one, push everything through a sieve or food mill to remove the seeds, then chop up the solid bits as finely as possible and return them to the strained liquid.

② Pour 60ml of the tomato pulp into a small bowl and set aside. Tip the remaining pulp into a large bowl and add the rice, 60ml of the olive oil, the basil, parsley, pecorino and sugar. Use a Microplane or fine grater to grate the garlic in (or mince to a paste with a knife) and stir to combine. Season with salt (taste to check for flavour), then cover and leave to sit at room temperature for 1 hr.

③ Heat oven to 190C, fan 170C, gas 5. Oil a large dish big enough to fit the tomatoes and potatoes (or use two dishes). Toss the potatoes with the remaining 30ml oil. Pour in the reserved tomato pulp and toss again, then season with a big pinch of salt.

④ Tip the potatoes into the prepared dish(es), spreading them out into a single layer and making 8 little spaces for the tomatoes to sit in. Season the cavity of each tomato with a pinch of salt and a drizzle of oil, then nestle them in between the potatoes – don't worry if some of the potatoes are a bit covered.

⑤ Give the rice mixture a stir and divide it equally between the hollowed tomatoes. Divide the mozzarella, if using, between the tomatoes and poke it into the rice mixture. Top the tomatoes with the tomato 'lids'.

⑥ Drizzle more oil over each tomato, then put the dish in the oven on the middle rack and cook for around 1 hr 30 mins until the rice is bulging and the tomatoes and potatoes are soft and beginning to char. Remove from the oven, cover with foil and let everything rest for 30 mins or so before serving. If you have leftovers, these stuffed tomatoes are even better reheated – simply cover them with foil and bake in an oven heated to 200C, fan 180C, gas 6 for 15–20 mins until heated through.

From Stagioni: Contemporary Italian Cooking to Celebrate the Seasons by Olivia Cavalli (Pavilion Books, £26)

IMAGES: SOPHIE DAVIDSON; JENNY ZARINS

Galayet bandora is a traditional dish popular across the Middle East, particularly Jordan and Palestine, with plentiful variation. Ripe tomatoes are sautéed with olive oil, hot chillies and seasonings — in this case, both fresh and dried mint, parsley and garlic — until silky and thick. The results are most commonly eaten scooped up with flatbread. You can serve it as part of a mezze, alongside grilled meat, fish, tofu, grains or pulses, or even use it as a pasta sauce. The cooked tomatoes can be made ahead and kept refrigerated for up to four days, and the garlic and pine nuts prepared and kept at room temperature until you're ready to eat.

Galayet banadoura (Sautéed tomatoes) by Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley

SERVES: SERVES FOUR AS PART OF A MEZZE SELECTION **TAKES: 35 MINS**

INGREDIENTS

- 800g plum tomatoes (8 or 9)
- 6 tbsp olive oil
- 1 green chilli, halved lengthways, then roughly chopped
- 8 garlic cloves, 2 crushed and the remaining 6 very thinly sliced lengthways
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp dried mint
- 10g pine nuts
- 5g picked mint leaves, shredded
- 5g parsley leaves, roughly chopped

METHOD

① Core the tomatoes and score the base with an 'x' (this makes it easier to remove their skins). There are two options for peeling the tomatoes. The first is to bring a medium saucepan of water to a simmer over a medium-high heat, then lower in the tomatoes and cook for 1-2 mins, or until the skins start to shrink back. Scoop the tomatoes out of the pan using a slotted spoon and, while still warm, peel and discard the skins. Alternatively, the second option is to put the tomatoes in a large bowl, cover them with boiling water and leave for 1-2 mins, then strain and discard the water. While the tomatoes are still warm, peel and discard the skins.

② Slice each peeled tomato into 6 wedges and set aside.

③ Pour 3 tbsp of the oil into a large sauté pan and set over a medium-high heat. Add the tomato wedges, chilli, crushed garlic, salt and a good grind of black pepper. Cook for around 18 mins, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have broken down and the sauce has thickened. Stir in the dried mint and transfer to a serving platter. Set aside to cool slightly.

④ Meanwhile, put the sliced garlic and the remaining oil in a small frying pan and set over a medium heat. Cook for 4 mins, or until the garlic starts to turn lightly golden. Add the pine nuts and cook for 3 mins more, or until they've taken on some colour. Pour the mixture, including the oil, over the tomatoes and garnish with the mint and parsley. Serve warm or at room temperature.

From Falastin: A Cookbook by Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley (Ebury Press, £27)

On the menu

FROM FRIED GREEN TOMATOES TO A FILIPINO STEW, HERE'S OUR PICK OF SOME OF THE FINEST TOMATO-BASED DISHES ON MENUS WORLDWIDE

SALMOREJO

Eslava, Seville

Family-run tapas bar Eslava serves modern takes on traditional Andalucian dishes. Its salmorejo — a chilled tomato soup that originated in Córdoba — is served as a tapa, made with two types of juicy Spanish tomato, garlic, bollo (Sevillian white sourdough) and Andalucian olive oil. €4.50 (£3.80) espacioeslava.com/en

FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

Twisted Soul Cookhouse & Pours, Atlanta

While there's evidence to suggest fried green tomatoes originated in the northeastern US in the 1800s, the crispy fried, cornmeal-coated slices are today considered a Southern classic. At casual fine-dining restaurant Twisted Soul Cookhouse & Pours, they're offered on the small plates menu, breaded and served with white pimento spread, roasted pepper coulis and a herb oil. $16 (£12.80) twistedsoulatl.com

TOMATO FRITTERS

Kokkalo Restaurant, Santorini

Thanks to its volcanic soil and sunshine, the cherry tomato is one of the Santorini's most-prized ingredients, essential to several of its specialities. These include tomato keftedes, or tomato fritters, a starter in which crushed or finely chopped tomatoes are mixed with onion, herbs and sometimes feta, formed into balls or patties, and fried in olive oil. At Kokkalo Restaurant, they're served with tzatziki — and views of the sparkling Aegean Sea. €7.70 (£6.60) kokkalosantorini.com

BEEF KALDERETA

Mama's Kubo, London

Kaldereta, or caldereta, is a tomato-based Filipino stew made with goat meat, vegetables and liver paste that was brought to the Philippines during Spanish colonisation. Today, it's traditionally eaten on special occasions and often made with chicken, pork or beef. For a slow-cooked beef version with baby potatoes, olives and peppers, head to Mama's Kubo, in Hampstead, where chef Rommel Bustarde creates dishes inspired by recipes passed down through his family. £10.75 mamaskubo.com

Honeycomb & Co's shakshuka is topped with crumbled Greek feta, tahini yoghurt and hazelnut dukkah
Below: The restaurant is one of Edinburgh's top brunch spots

TOMATO BREDIE

Bo-Kaap Kombuis, Cape Town

Tomato bredie, or 'tamatiebredie' in Afrikaans, is a rich tomato-based meat stew that's a staple in Cape Malay cuisine. Traditionally made with mutton, but often also with beef or lamb, it incorporates aromatic spices such as fresh ginger, cardamom and cloves. At family-run Bo-Kaap Kombuis, try tomato bredie made with beef. Diners are also treated to a magnificent view of Table Mountain. R139 (£6) bokaapkombuis.co.za

TARTE A LA TOMATE

La Merenda, Nice

Nice is located in one of France's three main tomato-growing regions, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, which makes it a prime spot for trying some classic French tomato dishes. In summer, head to tiny La Merenda in the city's old town. Here, chef Dominique Le Stanc rustles up a tart with a yeasted base that's loaded with roasted tomatoes and local olives. On a menu of typical Niçoise dishes, it's gained something of a cult following. €13 (£11.10) lamerenda.net

SHAKSHUKA

Honeycomb & Co, Edinburgh

Shakshuka is a breakfast and lunch dish of North African origin involving eggs poached in a spicy tomato, onion, garlic and pepper sauce seasoned with spices. Brunch spot Honeycomb & Co offers a version with a twist, seasoned with caraway and cumin and topped with crumbled feta, tahini yoghurt and homemade dukkah. It's served with seeded sourdough toast, plus there are plenty of add-ons to choose from, including haggis. £15.50 honeycombandco.com

ARROZ DE TOMATE

Restaurante Azenhas do Mar, Colares

Arroz de tomate is a traditional Portuguese dish made with tomatoes, onion and garlic and a highly absorptive rice variety known as carolino. At this clifftop restaurant set in a former watermill, it accompanies the grilled catch of the day. €5 (£4.30) azenhasdomar.com ▯

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ZINEB HATTAB

THE PIONEER

Mole Negro at KLE: slow-cooked Jerusalem artichoke with a Mexican-style mole sauce of toasted nuts, chillies, dark chocolate and cacao

IMAGES: ERNA DRION

AT HER MICHELIN-STARRED ZURICH RESTAURANT, KLE, ZINEB HATTAB IS PROVING THAT VEGAN DINING CAN BE BOTH SUSTAINABLE AND INDULGENT. WORDS: EMMA AL-MOUSAWI

"I specialised in fish and meat and could break down any whole animal," says Zineb 'Zizi' Hattab. This isn't perhaps what you'd expect to hear from the chef behind Switzerland's first Michelin-starred vegan restaurant, but Hattab is full of surprises.

For many chefs launching their debut restaurant, their first menu can be months, even years, in the making. Not for Hattab. At the start of 2020, three weeks before opening KLE in Zurich, the Moroccan-Spanish chef decided that she, and the restaurant, were to become vegan.

"I got cold feet," explains Hattab. "I looked at what impact the restaurant was going to have in the community and with the producers I had chosen, and it was crystal clear that the first step was to avoid animal products. There is no scale of gray, it's black or white — the difference it makes [to the planet]."

At the time, vegan fine-dining restaurants were few and far between, but taking her own path is something Hattab isn't afraid to do. "KLE doesn't really have one or two influences," says Hattab. "It's a mix of a lot of places I have been to, of things I have learned."

Instead of conventional descriptions, KLE's six-course tasting menu is a list of around two-dozen 'seasonal protagonists' ranging from broccolini to ras el hanout. "I started reducing the words and eventually decided to show just the seasons and what farmers have."

During dinner, it's impossible to predict what might come out of the kitchen. You wouldn't know, just from the word 'tomato' that the ingredient will arrive delicately peeled and braised in a homemade chamomile honey glaze, topped with pumpernickel tartare and roast aubergine cream. Equally, you're unlikely to imagine that 'mushroom' will translate to king oyster mushrooms with ponzu, strawberry foam and horseradish.

Something also missing from KLE's menus, website or social platforms is any overt reference to veganism. "We don't label ourselves; we just want to welcome people, make them feel that they belong, and share our passion with them," Hattab says. Service staff let guests know the food is plant-based.

This novel approach was a hit with diners, and in 2021 Hattab opened the more casual plant-based restaurant DAR, with Moroccan and Spanish influences drawn from her Spanish upbringing and Moroccan heritage (her parents are from Fez).

The chef sources the bulk of her produce from five farms within a 25-mile radius, and has a small network of trusted suppliers for the rest. Citrus and pistachios come from a friend's farm in Sicily, while cashews for KLE's vegan cream cheese arrive from Burkina Faso via Swiss fairtrade firm Gebana. Hattab also brings spices such as ginger and cumin from Morocco, along with date syrup and rosewater.

KLE's main dining room. The restaurant only opens five nights a week to give staff a better work-life balance

Ten years ago, Hattab was on a very different career trajectory. With no formal culinary experience, she quit her job as a software engineer in Zurich to pursue her passion. Between 2014 and 2019 — a period she describes as feeling like she was being chased by a bear in the woods — Hattab trained with some of the world's best chefs. Having written emails in search of kitchen work experience, she received a reply from Andreas Caminada's three-Michelin-star restaurant, Schloss Schauenstein in the mountain town of Fürstenau. "They said: if you want to come, you need to come 100%." She first opted to do an internship in Spain at Josean Alija's Nerua, hoping that working in her native tongue might make things easier.

"I went from having my nice apartment, and my nice salary and going skiing every weekend to living with nine teenagers, with one shower, and sleeping on a bunk bed," says Hattab. "I didn't care. I was there to learn." After growing in confidence at Nerua, she took Caminada up on his offer. Stints then followed with Massimo Bottura at Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy; the Rocca brothers at El Celler de Can Roca in Girona, Spain; and, finally, two years as executive sous-chef at Enrique Olvera's Cosme in New York, before she returned to Zurich ahead of KLE's launch.

Food had always been important to Hattab, who was born in Spain and grew up in the town of Blanes, on the Costa Brava. "When my aunts would come from Morocco, they would not go sightseeing in Barcelona, they would just cook," she says. "Fez has a very strong food culture. My parents both worked several jobs but when my dad had time off, the way to share it with us was the food they made."

It wasn't until she left home for university in Barcelona that Hattab herself got in touch with cooking, studying recipes alongside her engineering textbooks and creating dishes for friends. "It came to the point where I thought 'maybe this could be the way that I make a living.' It was about giving myself the chance to do what really brought me joy."

If there were any lingering doubts about Hattab's career path, they were obliterated in 2022. "We got an invitation to the Michelin gala, and I took our team of 10 because I thought it was going to be a once-in-a-lifetime thing," says Hattab. She had suspected a green star might be on the cards for both restaurants but when KLE was called for a Michelin star as well, Hattab was shocked. It was Switzerland's first Michelin-starred vegan restaurant and remains the only one in the country.

Though she was grateful, a star had never been in Hattab's plans. "It was important to focus on other things — to have a healthy team that speaks with respect to each other, with people who want to work here and not burn out after a year." Hattab believes sustainability is as much about people as the planet. KLE only serves dinner, five days a week, to encourage a better work-life balance. What's even more unusual is the makeup of the kitchen: 80% of the chefs are women.

Hattab feels equality has been slow in coming to the restaurant world. This is something the chef seeks to change by making herself more visible within the industry, but it also means time out of the kitchen, which is tricky. Last year saw the opening of Hattab's third restaurant, COR, and she is now focused on her own work-life balance — though 2024 so far hasn't exactly been quiet. The chef spent February and March running a KLE pop-up at five-star hotel Badrutt's Palace in St Moritz and is now putting the final touches to her English-language cookbook — a follow-up to her German-language title, *Taste of Love*.

One thing she and her team won't do, however, is stop striving to make a positive impact. "For us, caring is cool," she says.

Signature dishes

SICHUAN PEPPER SHORTBREAD
Sichuan pepper can be found growing wild around Zurich and is one of the KLE team's favourite things to forage. Blended into a delicate shortbread (pictured), it's crowned with a gunpowder tea foam, which is whipped up from white chocolate and vegan cream. Paired with preserved sea buckthorn, the sour notes harmonise with sweet white chocolate caramel sauce and raspberries from a local farm.

TORTELLINI ALLA PANNA
KLE's re-imagining of Modena's beloved tortellini alla panna is a homage to Hattab's time in the kitchen with Massimo Bottura. Handmade semolina pasta — stuffed with a rich blend of olives, cashews and fermented cashew cheese — is coated in a velvety vegan cream sauce infused with Modenese flavours such as nutmeg, thyme and parsley. Topped with a balsamic reduction and pistachio granella, this fresh take on a classic comfort dish is a KLE menu staple.

GRILLED KOHLRABI
A reinterpretation of aguachile negro — a Mexican dish traditionally made with raw fish or shrimp — sees kohlrabi sliced sashimi-style. Seared on one side for contrasting textures, the kohlrabi sits on a sauce of smoked ancho chilli, ginger, nori seaweed and coconut aminos (as an alternative to soy sauce). A dash of lime juice adds freshness, while a halo of potato and kohlrabi cream is finished with a sprinkling of fried wild peanuts.

IMAGES: ERNA DRION

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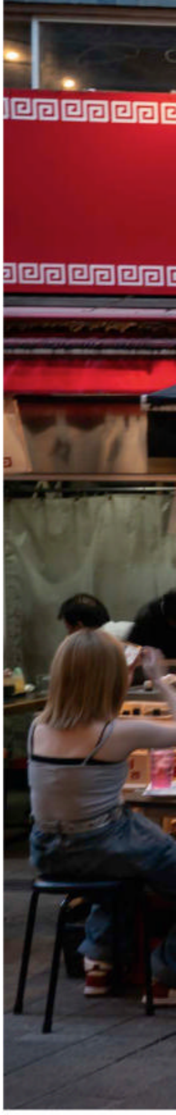
IMAGE: STOCKFOOD

seafood summer

From simply cooked Spanish prawns and sustainable Maine scallops to herb-scented Finnish fish soup, Japanese oysters and a citrussy tuna salad from Indonesia, explore a bountiful catch from around the world. These recipes, food experiences and ingredients from coastal communities both near and far will inspire fish-focused adventures in the kitchen and on your travels. And while this seafood menu is fresh, light and summery, it also includes some filling and fiery options, too, whether it's Tuscan fish stew, Singaporean chilli crab or Sri Lankan fish curry.

WORDS: JO DAVEY, EDDI FIEGEL, CAROLYN BOYD, NEIL DAVEY, KERRY WALKER & SARAH BARRELL



Japan

Getting a taste for oysters and izakaya culture

A raw food delicacy often downed whole in fine-dining restaurants, oysters are a revelation to be savoured in Japan's informal izakaya bars, where they're cooked and served steaming, and even wrapped in pork rashers. Words: Jo Davey

Folding into a small wooden seating space, barely two feet wide, I glance up at a chalkboard. Scrawled on it is today's menu, an artistic rendering of a language it's easier to recognise when written in a crisp computer font but trickier when handwritten. Typed menus aren't common in izakayas, Japan's traditional bar-restaurants that fall somewhere between a gastropub, tavern and tapas bar, but thankfully my local companion offers to make the order — as she does so I can make out the word 'kaki': oysters.

Whenever oysters are on the menu, I have to prepare myself. Rather than whinny with delight at an oncoming icy platter of briny bivalves, I see it more as something of an unpleasant necessity, albeit one worth being undertaken by any self-respecting gourmand.

To most people, though, oysters signal the finest haute cuisine and that's certainly the case in Japan. The country's almost 400 Michelin-starred restaurants are awash with them, raw, garnished and citrus-spritzed.

My companion tells me the oysters served here at Kakigoya, an izakaya in the Fukuromachi area of Hiroshima, are the best he's had anywhere. I nod, pasting on a smile as thick as the ceramic dish that thuds on the heavy wood table in the customarily dimly lit venue. But there's not a sparkling ice shard in sight: instead, there's a pile of bacon-wrapped goodies glistening with grease. And they smell glorious.

Each is a sweet-salty parcel that when bitten — a novelty itself for many oyster eaters who gulp, not bite — bursts with juice and umami. Suddenly, finally, I get what oysters are about.

Believed to have been eaten in Japan since the paleolithic Jōmon period (circa 14,000 BCE), oysters have become a millennia-long staple for the masses. And for all its reputation as a nation of raw seafood lovers, Japan consumes more cooked oysters than uncooked, and they're far from pretentiously prepared. Hiroshima is the largest domestic producer, where many families buy them by the kilo from markets, ready to cook at home throughout the winter in hotpots.

Often grill-smoky and always informal, izakayas are beloved not just because of their welcoming, local atmosphere, but because their food is consistently delicious. Sitting in Kakigoya, devouring my third kaki-bēkon, I begin my new oyster-loving life. Japan travels are now filled with the pleasure of cooked oysters: creamy kaki butter foil yaki from a Tokyo basement bar; billowing oyster nabe hotpot in Hokkaido; and the country-wide favourite, kaki-furai — breadcrumbed then deep-fried. And the most basic iteration I've tried yet is also the most dramatic: oysters torched over an oil drum at the tip of a 20cm-long flame at a market stall in Kanazawa. Oysters, it turns out, are an everyman ingredient, to be enjoyed baked, breaded and fried in the heat and hospitality of local bars.

WHERE TO TRY THEM: Many of Japan's best local izakayas don't have websites, including Tokyo's Manma Izakaya, which is around a three-minute walk from Higashi Shinjuku station, but Hiroshima's Siki-Sai and Ekohiiki, and Tokyo's Wabu are all excellent oyster-filled alternatives. siki-sai.com ekohiiki.com wabu.jp

MORE INFO: japan.travel/en/uk

IMAGES: GETTY; ALAMY

Customers dine at izakaya restaurants in the Ameyoko shopping street, Tokyo
Left: Oysters cooked over charcoal are regularly found on izakaya menus in Japan
Below: Raw Arctic char in Nunavut, Canada
Previous spread: Antipasti plate with octopus, squid, prawns and mussels

Canada

Arctic Char

Across Canada's Arctic north, one fish rules the waves: Arctic char. Indigenous peoples here have been eating it for millennia, many travelling to set up char fishing camps throughout the year. It's enjoyed fermented, dried (pipsi), boiled, smoked, raw or even frozen (quak).

Part of the same family as trout and salmon, char is found in alpine lakes and coastal waters around the Sub-Arctic and Arctic. Like salmon, some species return from saltwater life to their freshwater birthplace to spawn, although the Arctic char is arguable hardier given that it's the northernmost freshwater fish. While increasingly rare in other countries, char thrive in Canada's freezing, pristine waters, where they require less food than they do in warmer climes. They also gather together in winter, making them well suited to growing in densely packed farms — a sustainable and space-conscious crop.

Char flesh, flavour and scale colour varies depending on the season and environment. They're a surprisingly beautiful fish, becoming silver in the sea before their backs darken and bellies ripen into red-orange. Mild in flavour and similar to trout, char's fatty flesh is succulent while its delicate skin goes deliciously crisp.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Nordic and UK farmed Arctic char is readily available in the UK; Canadian stock can be found at select fishmongers. Learn about Inuit use of Arctic char on TV show *Nunavummi Mamarijavut*. aptntv.ca/nunavummimamarijavut **JD**

Clockwise from top: The Bay of Galle on Sri Lanka's southwest coast is a hub for traditional fishing industries; Finnish spring/summer favourite lohikeitto; in Louisiana, crawfish are used in numerous local recipes; conch ceviche at Goldie's Conch House in Nassau, Bahamas

Caribbean

Conch

The Caribbean's prize conch (pronounced: conk) species is fittingly known as queen conch. A great marine snail found on dinner tables across the region, queen conch is one of the Caribbean's most valuable seafood species. They're often farmed, but in the wild conches are plucked from sandy seagrass beds by scuba- or free-divers. Fishermen can often clear an entire area of the molluscs in one swoop, leaving them prone to overfishing, which is why seasonal and geographical limits have been introduced across the Caribbean. Research into sustainable conch farming and restorative aquaculture will soon prove vital for countries like Belize, the Bahamas, Jamaica and Honduras, where it's central to the economy and cuisine.

In the Bahamas, conch's lightly sweet meat is often served in salads, soups and as fritters. In Jamaica, Haiti and Grenada it's commonly found in curries or spiced stews, while in the Grenadines it's barbecued on the beach and in Puerto Rico it's used in ceviche.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Find conch fritters and Bahamian-style ceviche in seaside shacks and cafes in Nassau, including Goldie's Conch House. facebook.com/GoldiesOfficial **JD**

Sri Lanka

Fish curry

Rice with curry is considered Sri Lanka's national dish but its parameters are far from set. Ingredients flow with the seasons or the day, but fish forms the basis of many of its most popular iterations. Sri Lanka is a hive of fresh and saltwater fishing, its indigo seas full of tuna, mackerel and marlin, reefs of snapper and barracuda and backwaters hiding tilapia and golden barramundi.

Fish is indispensable here, feeding families and producing massive trade income. Much of the day's catch can make a classic fish curry; the only requirement is that the flesh is firm and doesn't flake apart during cooking. Sri Lankan curries sing with sour flavours including lime and tamarind. These sit alongside spices and aromatics such as garlic, pandan, fenugreek, cumin and cinnamon, all swirled into creamy, oil-flecked coconut sauces. There are two main fish curry types, milder kirata and spicy mirisata, but ambul thiyal is a particularly sour version that's traditionally used to preserve fish.

WHERE TO TRY IT: For exemplary fish curry, head to the Ceylon Curry Club, in the Dutch Hospital region of Colombo. ceyloncurryclub.com **JD**

IMAGES: GETTY; I PROMISE MEDIA PRODUCTIONS

Louisiana

Crawfish

Louisiana is undoubtable the crawfish (crayfish) state: it was the first to name a crustacean and is home to numerous crawfish festivals. What's more, with over 1,300 crawfish farmers and 1,000 fishermen, it's the top crawfish producer in the US.

Come Easter, its streets are rich with shellfish aromas as many families gather for huge crawfish boils — a Cajun meal usually complete with sausage, corn and potatoes that's become a popular celebratory dish.

Two species of the crustaceans have been commercially harvested here since the 1800s, although its history here goes back way further, as Native Americans used to catch them using deer meat tied to reeds. When Acadians, exiled from Atlantic Canada, settled in Louisiana in the 18th century, crawfish became an abundant staple for poorer communities — only gaining wider appreciation in the 20th century.

Also called crawdads, crawfish crop up in classic gumbo stew, po' boy sandwiches, seafood jambalaya and étouffée. They also star in Vietnamese-inspired crawfish boils, popularised over the border in Houston, Texas.

WHERE TO TRY THEM: Crawfish harvests were hit hard in 2023-24, due to severe weather fluctuations, but Mrs Rose's B&B in Lafayette usually offers cooking classes and crawfish excursions. crawfishhaven.net **JD**

Finnish lohikeitto

A favourite Finnish spring-summer soup, lohikeitto uses various types of fish, but salmon remains the most popular choice, all garnished generously with fragrant green herbs. Making the broth from scratch will increase the dish's depth and flavour but using shop-bought stock is also effective. Lohikeitto is found across Finland; its variant, from the eastern region of Kainuu uses rye flower to thicken the fish broth rather than cream.

SERVES: 4 **TAKES: 45 MINS**

INGREDIENTS FOR THE BROTH

1kg white fish heads and bones
1 onion or part of a leek, halved
1 tsp white peppercorns
2 bay leaves

FOR THE SOUP

400g skinless salmon fillets
20g butter
1 onion or the white part of a leek, cut into 1cm cubes
500g potatoes (firm variety), peeled and cut into 2cm cubes
1 tsp black pepper
1 large carrot, peeled and cut into 1cm cubes
200ml double cream
large bunch of dill and chives, chopped

METHOD

① To make the broth, rinse the white fish bones and heads well and put them into a saucepan, then fill with just enough cold water to cover them and bring to the boil. Add the onion or leek, white peppercorns and bay leaves and lower the heat to simmer for 20 mins with the lid on, carefully skimming off any white foam throughout. Strain the broth into a jug and set aside, discarding the bones, onion, peppercorns and bay leaves.

② Dice the fish into bite-size pieces and lightly salt, then cover and place in the fridge.

③ Melt the butter in a saucepan and sweat the onions for around 10 mins over a low heat. Once the onion is translucent, add the potatoes, pepper and broth. Bring to a boil, add the carrot and reduce to a simmer for 10-15 mins, or until the potatoes are tender.

④ Stir in the cream, then remove the pot from the heat and add the salmon. Mix gently and let it stand for 10 mins to lightly poach the fish. To serve, sprinkle with the dill and chives.

Recipe courtesy of Helsinki Partners

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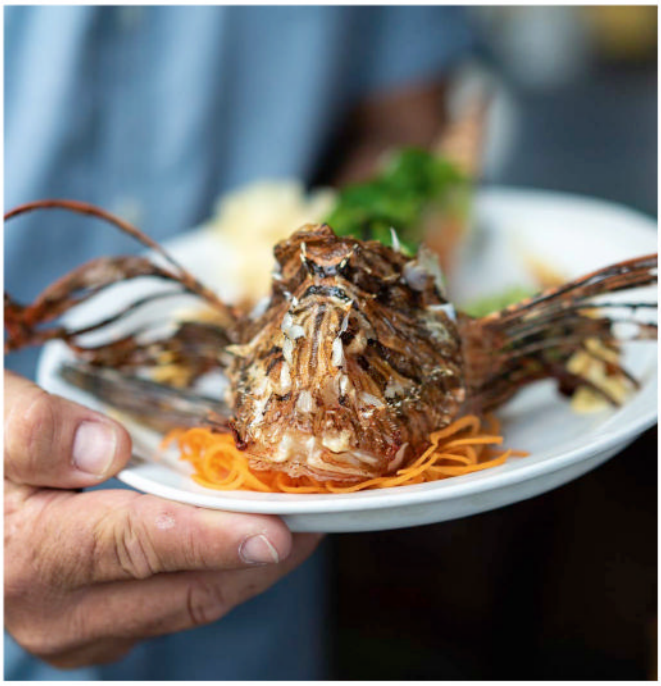

Florida

Lionfish

Could a Florida restaurateur's practice of serving lionfish be a sustainable solution to the exploding numbers of this invasive species?

Where have they come from?
With their fan-like pectoral fins and dorsal spines, lionfish have long been a striking, colourful addition to home aquariums. Over the past 40 years or so, they've become a huge invasive problem in the waters off America's southeast coast and in the Caribbean, and more recently in the Mediterranean.

How did they get there?
Likely causes include accidental introduction from American aquaculture facilities, people releasing them from aquariums and, in a theory almost out of a Hollywood movie, via Hurricane Andrew flooding Miami's aquarium stores in 1992.

What's the problem?
In their native Indo-Pacific, lionfish numbers are controlled by natural predators such as moray eels, tiger groupers and sharks. They have voracious appetites, and in their adopted waters, no natural predators. This means they're competing for food with native stocks such as snapper, which is already facing overfishing. As Florida restaurateur John Mirabella has pointed out, they're "ambush predators and park themselves on populations of baby fish and gobble them up quickly". In addition, lionfish reproduce all year; a mature female can release some two million eggs annually. They also feed on species such as algae-eating parrotfish, which allows seaweed to overtake the reefs.

What's the solution?
According to Mirabella, sushi, sashimi and lemon, white wine, garlic and capers... In non-native waters, humans are a lionfish's only predator, so, at the suggestion of a conservationist friend, Mirabella started spearfishing for lionfish a few years ago and serving the catch at his Castaway Waterfront Restaurant in Marathon, Florida.

How does it taste?
It's a white, firm but flaky, mild and buttery fish that absorbs other flavours efficiently — eliciting the classic description from diners that it's a bit like chicken, a bit like fish.

Where can we try it?
Castaway Waterfront Restaurant serves it as sushi, sashimi, fish tacos and 'wreckdiver-style' (lemon, white wine, garlic, tomatoes and capers). But the challenges of fishing for this spiny, venomous beast makes availability hard to predict. Lionfish can inject venom via their spiky fins, making them tricky to catch. This is harmless if ingested and not present in the meat of the fish. Other restaurants also beginning to include it on their menus include Catch, in Wilmington, North Carolina and Georgia Sea Grill on St Simons Island, Georgia.

What about other parts of the world?
Warming sea temperatures and the 2015 widening of the Suez Canal have seen lionfish appearing in increasing numbers around the eastern Mediterranean. In recent years, it's been served in restaurants across Greece, Cyprus and Lebanon. **ND**

For recipes and a guide to preparing lionfish dishes, visit the 'Eating Lionfish' section at lionfish.co

From left: Lionfish roll at Castaway Waterfront Restaurant; Marathon in the Florida Keys

IMAGES: STEPHANIE VERMILLION; ALAMY

Germany

Matjessalat

The brined fish base for matjes salad, or matjessalat, began not in Germany but the Netherlands, in the closing years of the 14th century. A Dutchman was the first to preserve fresh 'virgin' or young herring in brine — the name matjes comes from the Dutch word for maidens. The following six centuries saw matjes gild entire cities through trade, birth festivals and even feature on coats of arms — what's more, they've since become a north German staple.

These young herrings are caught from early to mid-summer in the North Sea, just before their breeding season begins, and are prized for their high oil content. They work wonderfully well in this German salad with the tart, vinegary flavours of apple, pickles, beetroot and the soured creaminess of creme fraiche or yoghurt.

Unlike most fish preparations, the pancreas, and occasionally the liver, are left inside the herring, as their enzymes develop the flavour and help make the already soft flesh more tender. Matjes are found throughout the Baltic, Nordic and Low Countries under a wealth of names and with variations in the marinade; some contain cider, sugar, bay, mace, onion, wine or even tea.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Der Kleine Heinrich Gasthaus, in the Schleswig-Holstein town of Glückstadt, serves several traditional matjessalat dishes. der-kleine-heinrich.de **JD**

Singapore

Chilli crab

The crammed lanes of Singapore's hawker stalls are frequently laced with the intoxicating smell of seafood — chief among them, the spicy scent of chilli crab. Arguably the country's best-loved dish, it had a nebulous — occasionally contentious — beginning.

Many say the dish began life in Malaysia, but Singaporeans understandably disagree, citing a clear origin story for the modern-day tomato-based dish. In the 1950s, Cher Yam Tian's husband, who loved catching mud crabs on the beach, asked her to do something different with the day's haul. The resulting tomato and chilli concoction was so good they began selling it from a seafront street cart, taking Singapore by storm.

Over the years, chefs have introduced their own elements, with sambal or lemon, egg or vinegar added to an unctuous spiced sauce that's both savoury and sweet. Served shell-on and slathered in sauce, chilli crab is impossible to eat with any dignity. The only way to approach it is with hands, mallets, bread buns and myriad serviettes at the ready, but the silky, sumptuous reward is worth it.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Though Cher Yam Tian died last year, her son Roland Lim is honouring her dish at his Michelin-recommended restaurant, Roland, which still uses her secret recipe. rolandrestaurant.com.sg **JD**

Chilli crab is one of Singapore's signature dishes

IMAGE: STOCKFOOD

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Spain

Fishing for prawns in Palamós

Take a boat ride with fishermen along the Costa Brava coast to learn about prized gambas rojas, the sweet red prawns found in Catalan dishes such as paella and fideuà, as well as on the menu of Michelin-starred restaurants nationwide. Words: Eddi Fiegel

IMAGES: STOCKFOOD; EDDI FIEGEL; AWL IMAGES; ALAMY

Standing on the edge of the marina in the port of Palamós, about an hour's drive north of Barcelona, I shiver in the dark, 6am chill. A 16th-century church bell tower looms high above the Old Town behind me and only the metallic whine of the chains linking the boats to the dock interrupts the early morning silence.

I've come to join Xavi Miró and his crew aboard the *Estrella del Sur III* for a day of 'pescaturisme' (fishing tourism), accompanying them as they trawl the sea off the Catalan coast for gambas rojas, the red prawns for which Palamós is known. Like champagne and parmigiano reggiano cheese, the prawns have a protected designation of origin classification and have to be caught within a specific radius of the Palamós coast.

With its succulent, intensely flavoursome flesh, this shellfish is prized throughout Spain, appearing on the menus of local restaurants as well as at Michelin-starred spots like Girona's feted El Celler de Can Roca and the Basque Country's renowned Asador Etxebarri (currently fourth in the World's 50 Best Restaurants ranking).

By 8.30am, we're 40 miles out to sea and, on the sunlit deck, I watch as the crew cast a long net before lowering it towards the seabed. Then it's a waiting game and, with the notorious Tramontana wind making the sea challengingly lively, I take refuge in the captain's cabin.

Amid fascinating facts about the prawns' physiognomy and life cycle, Xavi tells me how Palamós's fishing community only works during January and December, to allow the marine life time to flourish and reproduce. "It's not just about fishing as much as you can," he says. "It's about fishing well."

Before I know it, six hours have flown by, and all of a sudden, a sense of urgency takes over. Xavi dons his boots and sets the boat to automatic pilot — then it's all hands on deck as he and his crew reel in the net. Silvery fish slither atop a vast mound of reddish prawns wedged in the green mesh. The fishermen set to work, preparing their catch for auction, sorting the prawns by size, hosing them down with clean, salted water and packing them on trays of ice. The main work now done, we enjoy a fish stew made with the previous day's tuna catch.

We dock and transfer the prawns to a quality control officer, who meticulously examines each one by hand before giving them a barcode detailing their origin. The trays then edge their way up to the auction room on a conveyer belt and, moments later, we watch in anticipation as licensed fish wholesalers place their bids. The prawns sell for €55 (£47) a kilo, but, as Xavi explains, that figure can rise to around €200 (£170) in December, when seafood — prawns in particular — forms part of the traditional Spanish Christmas Eve dinner.

The prawns are served the following day at Espai del Pei, a glass-fronted venue above the quayside Museu de la Pesca fishing museum, where you can watch traditional Catalan fish dishes being prepared before tasting them. Two burly fishermen, Pitu and Salvador, are making fideuà — akin to paella, but with pasta instead of rice — stirring silky noodles into a pan of rich, sulphury, saffron-laced fish stock. Finally, they add the prawns, which are sweet but with a rich, intense shrimp flavour. I swirl in a dollop of garlicky aioli, and Pitu recites a local saying: "When you eat your fideuà, wherever it may be, always remember to think of the fishermen.

HOW DO TO IT: A one-day 'pescaturisme' fishing trip costs €100 (£86) per person. A pre-booked cooking demo and lunch at Espai del Peix costs €25 (£21) per person. pescaturismepalamos.org museudelapesca.org

MORE INFO: costabrava.org spain.info

Palamós port, with a view of Santa Maria de Palamós church in the distance
Clockwise from right: Salt cod with chickpeas and egg; sorting prawns on board the Estrella del Sur III; fideuà with prawns

Portugal

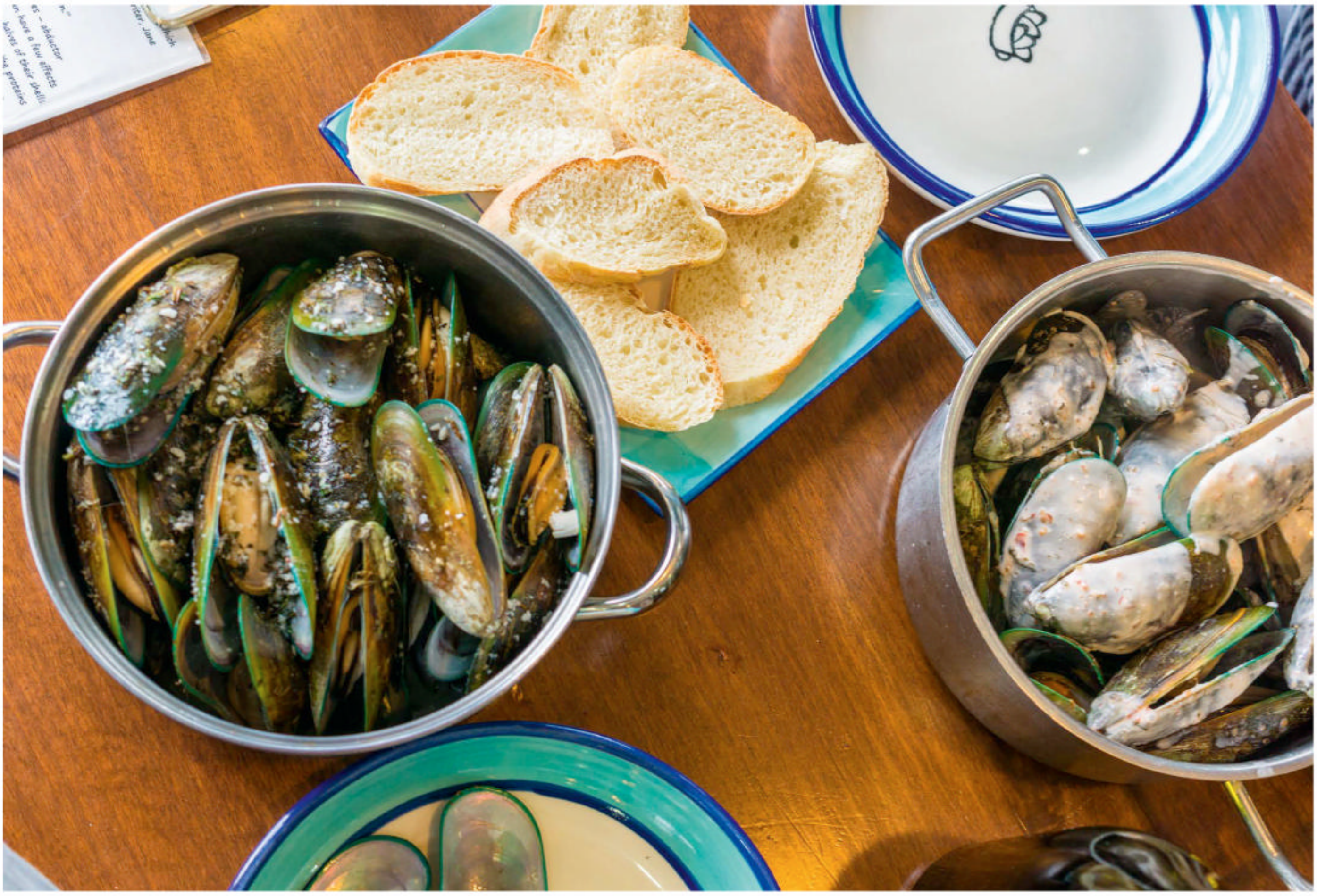
Salt cod

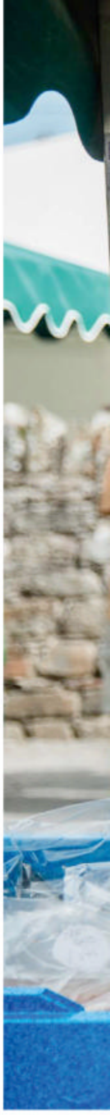
Portugal's enduring love of bacalhau (dried salted cod) dates back to the Age of Discoveries, when the country's 15th-century explorers sailed out into a world largely unmapped. Sardines are abundant in the waters around Portugal, but don't lend themselves well to being salted. Cod, however, does — and with the discovery of vast reserves of the fish around the distant shores of Newfoundland in 1497, bacalhau became the seafarer's staple diet.

Today, Portugal consumes 20% of the world's cod, and according to legend, it has anywhere between 365 and 1,001 dishes using bacalhau. Cod's dense, flaky, versatile flesh becomes concentrated in drying, the perfect ingredient to stand up to dishes like bacalhau com natas (baked cod with cream), egg and olive casserole, and arroz de bacalhau (cod with rice).

Cod shares the Portuguese piscatorial crown with sardines — a beautifully meaty, umami-filled fish found the length of Portugal's coast. Versatile and affordable, sardines are commonly grilled, canned or served in abundance as a sardinhada feast. In fact, if they weren't seasonal, they may well have beaten cod to national dish status.

WHERE TO TRY IT: In Lisbon, you can explore a remarkable array of bacalhau dishes at D'Bacalhau restaurant, while Can The Can showcases sardines and Portugal's masterly art of canning fish. restaurantebacalhau.com canthecan.net **JD**





New Zealand

Green-lipped mussels

Named for their shells' myrtle-green border, these mussels are native to New Zealand's coastline. They've been industrially farmed since the 1960s, after overfishing destroyed wild mussel stocks, but have been part of Māori culture for centuries. Known as 'kūtai' in Māori, the bivalves are such an important, traditional food source, they're considered a 'taonga' (a valued treasure) — and Mātauranga Māori (traditional Māori knowledge) has informed scientific restoration of mussel beds in the North Island's Ōhiwa harbour.

Some believe the endemic mussels have anti-inflammatory health benefits, a link supposedly made when comparing arthritis prevalence in coastal Māori communities to people living inland. Their naturally occurring levels of omega-3 and vitamin B12 also mean they're often made into supplements.

But the most enjoyable way to ingest green-lipped mussels, by far, is to eat them. They thrive along New Zealand's intertidal and coastal zones, where the clean, phytoplankton-rich seas create a juicy meat that's tender and salty with a touch of sweetness. And farming them means that natural ocean populations aren't depleted, keeping the industry sustainable.

WHERE TO EAT THEM: Tuck into green-lipped mussels at The Mussel Pot in Havelock, the so-called 'mussel capital of the world', in the South Island's Marlborough Sounds. themusselpot.co.nz **JD**

Symi

Fried seafood

In Greece's sunlit Dodecanese island group, scattered off the west coast of Turkey, sits Symi. This small island with a long, strong history of seafaring and seafood was once known for its shipbuilding and sea sponge industries; today, the sponges are all but gone and the new marine mainstay is shrimp.

Known as Simiako garidaki, the tiny, vibrantly red prawns that live in the waters around Symi are the island's speciality. They're flavourful enough that they're usually served simply — pan-fried until crisp, usually in olive oil, and seasoned with only a dash of salt and pepper — but occasionally you'll find chefs branching out by tossing them in flour before frying or adding garlic or a squeeze of lemon.

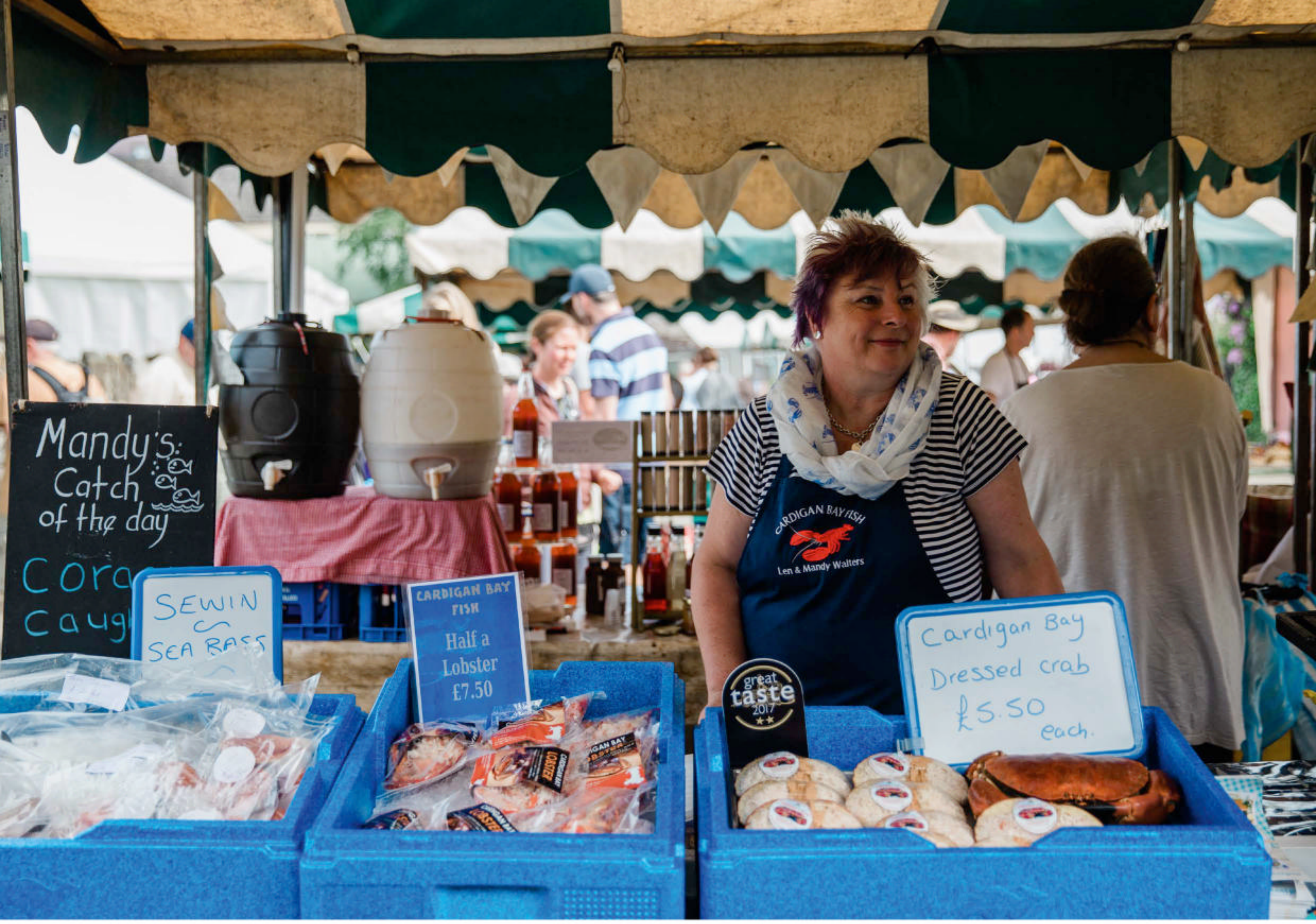
The prawns are so small, soft and delicate that they're eaten whole, in the shell, the heads and tails offering a delightfully deep hit of sweetened sea and salt and adding a crunch to the bite.

These prized prawns aren't Symi's only culinary draw, however — the island does a roaring trade in all manner of fried seafood, including silky soft calamari, lightly fried anchovies, crispy whitebait and succulently juicy cod fritters, often flavoured with just a touch of fresh lemon.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Most of the island's local tavernas serve fried seafood, including the ever-popular Taverna Haris in Gialos. taverna-haris.business.site **JD**

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK; JAMES BOWDEN; AWL IMAGES

Clockwise from top left: Steamed New Zealand green-lipped mussels at The Mussel Pot; Mandy, of Cardigan Bay Fish, sell sewin at St Dogmaels local producers' market; the colourful harbour on the Greek island of Symi, in the Dodecanese islands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Wales

Sewin

Migratory trout that swim in West Wales's tidal estuaries and rivers, sewin tend to be fatter and firmer than the taxonomically identical brown trout. The peak season for catching them is short — June and July — and only a handful of fishermen have licences.

When caught using the traditional Welsh method of coracle fishing, sewin hold PGI status, and the practice is much as it would've been in pre-Roman times, using a pair of coracles — round, basket-like boats woven from local willow or carved from ash, with a net strung between them. Fishing happens at neap tide and at twilight (described by Welsh coracle fishermen as 'clyfwchwr', or when seven stars can be seen in the sky), so the sewin don't see the shadows of coracles or net. It requires well-honed skill and stealthy silence from two fishermen, who paddle rhythmically in a figure of eight, drawing in the net with perfect synchrony. It's all worth it, they say, for the distinctive, delicate, sweet flavour of the pink-fleshed fish. Simplicity in cooking is the way to go — pan-fry it with a little butter and lemon and serve with Pembrokeshire new potatoes and perhaps some samphire or laver.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Len, a coracle fisherman for 30 years, and his wife Mandy, both of Cardigan Bay Fish, sell sewin at St Dogmaels local producers' market on Tuesday mornings in season. If your luck is in, sewin are also on the menu at The Ferry Inn nearby. theferryinn.co.uk **KW**

Norfolk

Shellfish

Ashley Mullenger, the first woman to win the UK's 'Fisherman of the Year' award, talks about Norfolk's finest catch, what it's like to work in a male-dominated industry and the joy of a life spent at sea

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What sparked your interest in fishing?
A morning's mackerel fishing in Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk with a skipper called Nigel had me hooked — and he's never been able to get rid of me. He asked me to come and work for him, so in 2018 I jacked in my office job to become one of the UK's few commercial fisherwomen, unhooking and gutting mackerel and preparing baits and pots. I loved the contrast: the lack of stress; the seriously funny fishermen.

What's the catch in Norfolk?
We currently catch 90% shellfish — crabs, lobsters and whelks. There's also fantastic mackerel and cod, which we catch responsibly with hook and line. We're highly selective: everything undersize goes back. There's no fish market in Wells-next-the-Sea, so we sell directly on the quay. It's all sushi-grade, freshly caught that day and very reasonably priced as we've cut out the middlemen. Excited campers come to buy lobsters we sell for as little as £10 when they're abundant in summer.

And what's the best way to cook your catch?
We've got some of the best seafood in the world right here: Cromer crab that's clean, fresh and sweet because of the chalk reefs acting like a giant filter. I enjoy it in a dip, mixing the meat with cream cheese, spices and spring onions; in potato-free crab cakes where I blitz it up with chilli and coriander; or in a linguine with chilli and rocket. Our lobsters are great just halved, barbecued and served with garlic butter. The mackerel we get can be as big as a boot — a foot long. I've gutted so many I'm personally sick of them, but they're delicious raw in sashimi or in a pâté.

In 2022, you were the first-ever woman to win the Under 10-metre Fisherman of the Year award at the annual Fishing News Awards. How did that feel?
I nearly cried! It meant total acceptance in a male-dominated industry. There's no gender pay gap in fishing — you get out what you put in. There are a lot of perceived notions that fishing is too heavy and dangerous for women. But mostly it's about being aware of the environment, following good practices, communication and teamwork — things Nigel and I have in spades.

What does responsible fishing mean to you?
There are environmental pressures to consider. Wind farms in the southern North Sea are pushing fishermen into an ever-smaller area. But our little boat means we can lower expenses and don't need to take as many fish. I always v-notch [carve a mark] egg-bearing female lobsters, for instance, to show they need to be returned to the water to replenish stocks. Social media helps increase visibility: you have to be the change you want to see.

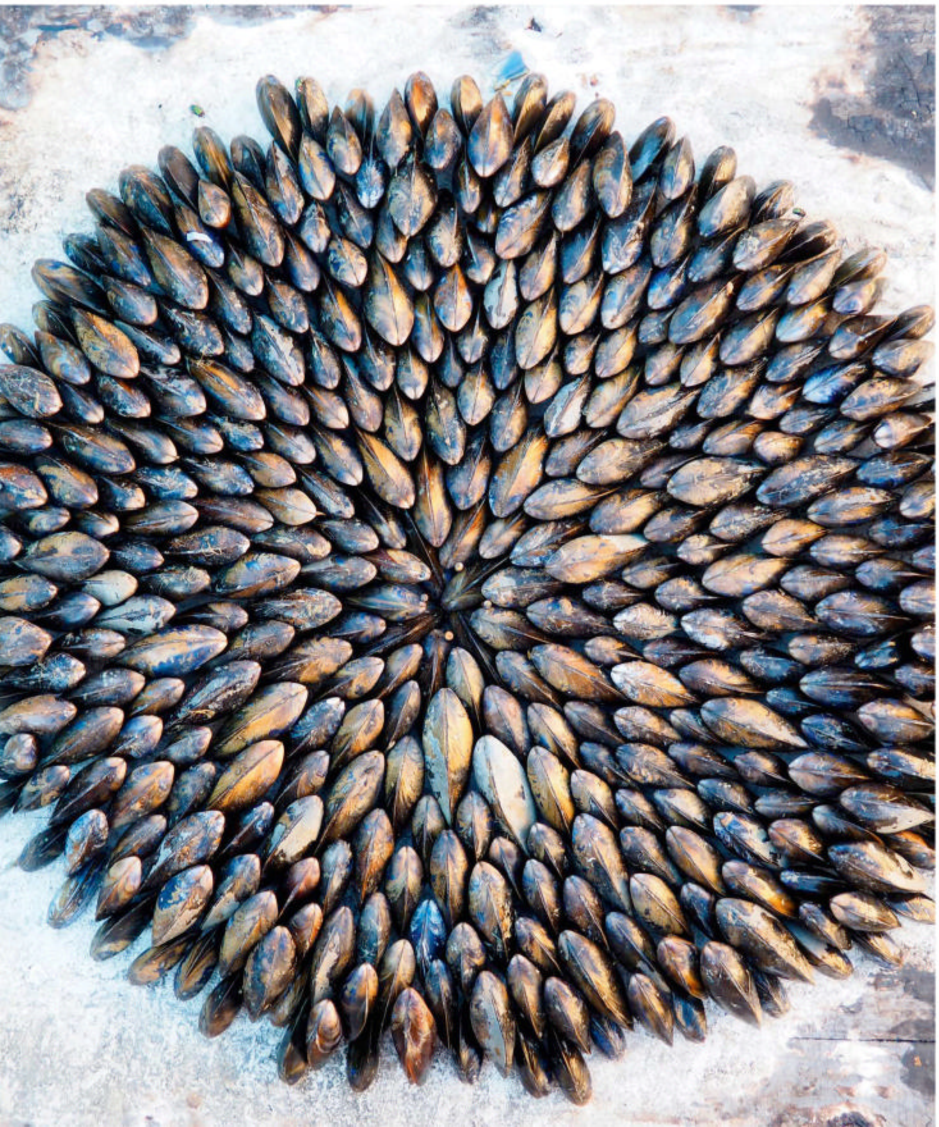
What are the highs and lows of a life at sea?
Nobody asks anything of you at sea. It's a calm, raw, natural environment where you can be 100% yourself. With the 2am and 3am summer starts, you see the most beautiful dawn colours while everyone else is asleep. But if you're having a bad day, it's a tough job. Some evenings, when people are tucked up in the warmth watching *EastEnders*, we're being battered by rain and waves, arms deep in mud and whelk snot.

Ashley's new book, My Fishing Life, is out now (£22, Robinson). Follow her @thefemalefisherman

INTERVIEW: KW

Clockwise from top left: Ashley Mullenger; Livorno's traditional cacciucco fish stew; éclade de moules is a culinary speciality in western France

IMAGES: ELLIE ADAMS; STOCKFOOD; SHUTTERSTOCK



Tuscany

Cacciucco

Tuscan cuisine is synonymous with red wines, meaty pastas and bean stews, but get beyond Italy's iconic medieval hill towns and you'll find a stretch of seafood-rich coast. The port town of Livorno, between Pisa and the beaches of the Maremma Park, hosts one of Europe's largest indoor markets, whose sprawling seafood pavilion offers prized Tuscan bottarga di muggine (cured mullet fish roe, sliced as an appetiser or grated onto pasta), octopus, lobster, sea bream, sea bass and cuttlefish, the latter favoured for spaghetti or risotto al nero di sepia ('black with cuttlefish ink').

This seafood spread forms cacciucco, a dark-red Tuscan fisherman's stew whose name is thought to derive from the Turkish word 'küçük' ('small'), referencing the size of the fish pieces used. Cacciucco traditionally contains five types of seafood — one for each 'c' in its name: octopus and squid or cuttlefish go into the pot to cook first, with delicate mussels, clams and prawns later added to the rich tomato sauce.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Chef Michelangelo Rongo serves an exemplary cacciucco, complete with garlic-toasted Tuscan bread, at Restaurante Aragosta, in Livorno's pretty portside Piazza dell'Arsenale. foodiesitaly.it **SB**

Charente-Maritime

Éclade de moules

This curious dish is served in restaurants in France's Charente-Maritime — a region better known for its Marennes oysters — and it follows a smoky ritual like no other. Mussels are arranged in a beautiful concentric pattern on a plywood board, hinge-side up, then covered in long, skinny pine needles gathered from the nearby beaches, where maritime pines tower over the coastline. The needles are then set alight, creating a small bonfire on top of the mussels and poaching them in their own juices, ensuring a deliciously smoky flavour.

Once cooked, the mussels are served with bread and garlic butter, along with a chilled glass of the local wine, muscadet sur lie.

Locals will tell you the tradition developed among the area's shellfish farmers and fishermen to provide a meal at the end of the working day, when they would arrange the bivalves on the ground ('terre' in French) — the key to their traditional name, terrées de moules.

WHERE TO TRY THEM: At Le Parc des Graves, in the pretty village of Mornac-sur-Seudre, you'll likely see the smoke before you see the restaurant. 5 Rte de la Seudre, 17113 Mornac-sur-Seudre. T: 0033 546 22 75 14 **CB**

Gohu ikan

Indonesia's answer to a spicy ceviche originates in the Maluku and Sulawesi regions, where the Manado word 'gohu' translates as 'pickled'. Local fishermen were said to have gone out to sea with fresh chillies, shallots, calamansi (a small citrus fruit) and salt — and, when hunger struck, freshly caught fish were filleted on the spot and combined with the ingredients. This citrus-cured, tangy tuna dish is incredibly easy to make but quality is paramount, so ask a trusted supplier for sashimi-grade fish.

SERVES: 4 **TAKES: 15 MINS PLUS 10 MINS CHILLING**

INGREDIENTS

2-3 red bird's eye chillies, finely chopped
2 banana shallots, finely chopped
handful of basil, finely chopped
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp sugar
1 tbsp groundnut oil
4 calamansi (or 2 limes), juiced
400g sashimi-grade tuna steak or tuna belly, cut into 1cm cubes
micro basil leaves, to garnish (optional)

METHOD

1. Put the chillies, banana shallots, basil, salt, sugar, groundnut oil and calamansi juice in a bowl and mix well. Add the tuna and put the bowl in the fridge for 10 mins.
2. Remove from the fridge and gently toss everything together. Serve topped with micro basil leaves, if you like.

This recipe was adapted from The Indonesian Table by Petty Pandean-Elliott (£24.95, Phaidon).

Downeast Dayboat's line-grown scallops, Maine

Maine
Scallops

Though better-known for its lobster, Maine produces exceptionally sweet, creamy and sustainable scallops — but it wasn't always so. In the mid-2000s, US scallop landings were so low that the industry essentially collapsed. Restrictions to rebuild stocks meant fishermen saw some areas closed indefinitely to scallop fishing, others rotationally closed and a moratorium on new fishing permits. The state still controls fishing today, with periodic restrictions to prevent overharvesting (as is the case for the final two-thirds of this year) and its scallops have bounced back in an astounding way.

Maine has also seen a swell in scallop aquaculture in the past couple of decades. Wild scallop fishermen have turned to farming, using lantern nets or line-grown methods, allowing year-round production.

Today, Maine's Atlantic sea scallops are one of the most valuable fisheries in the US. The cool, crisp Atlantic produces sparklingly fresh seafood, and flowing water around line-grown scallops allows them to feed constantly, growing fat and delectably fleshy.

WHERE TO TRY THEM: Try Downeast Dayboat's line-grown Maine scallops at Reverence in Harlem, New York where they have featured in the likes of ceviche with a corn 'leche' (milk). reverence.nyc **JD**

Turkey
Lakerda

Turkey's cooler winters see fatty, protein-rich torik (Atlantic bonito) migrating down the great blue curves of the Bosphorus. As fishermen pull in their silver-blue catch, those measuring the ideal 60-70cm — approaching their maximum length — are set aside for making lakerda.

Lakerda has a number of origin stories. The name is said to derive from the Byzantine Greek word for mackerel, but there's also a popular belief that Sephardic Jews brought it to the Ottoman Empire from Spain.

Popular in both Greece and Turkey, particularly in the latter's Şile muncipality, it draws on a centuries-old way of preserving raw torik through pickling. And the traditional method is a specialised craft: once the head and tail are removed, the fish is cut in three, cleaned, slathered in salt and the pieces placed upright in a salt-filled container. They're then refrigerated for around a fortnight, during which time they're rotated daily.

Once the salt is washed away, the torik's butter-soft flesh is sliced and served with red onion and olive oil. It's commonly eaten as part of a spread, alongside a glass of raki.

WHERE TO TRY IT: Lakerda often appears on the menu of Istanbul's Michelin-recommended seafront Kiyi restaurant. kiyi.com.tr **JD** ▯

IMAGES: YUKI SUGIURA; ALEX TODD

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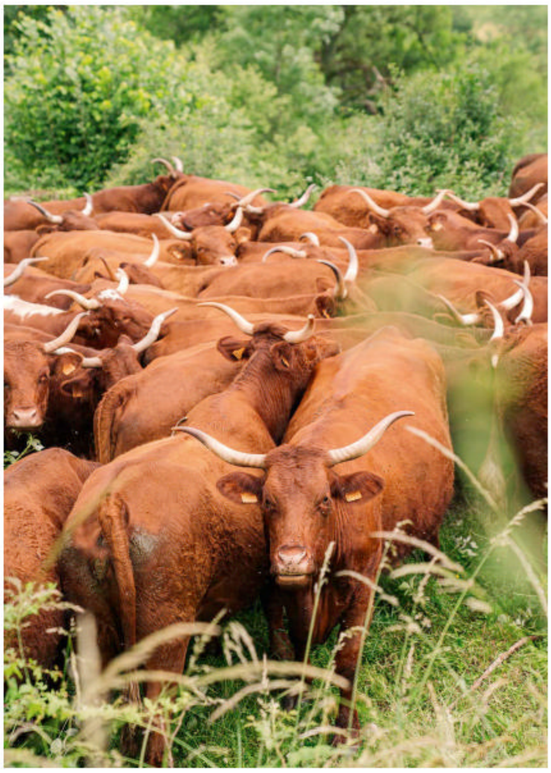
Fields of flavour

In the heart of France's Massif Central, from the slopes of the Cantal mountains to the pastures of the Aubrac plateau, the volcanic soil has given rise to a breathtaking floral landscape — fertile ground for culinary traditions, gastronomic creativity and some of the country's finest cheeses

WORDS: CAROLYN BOYD
PHOTOGRAPHS: CLARA TUMA



Odile looks at me suspiciously.

Clockwise from above: The Salers cows at GAEC Galvaing Père et Fils wait at the end of the afternoon to go home for milking; the Cantal countryside; Pierre Galvaing processes the dried cheese pieces into a round cheese (tome); a curated flowerscape in the gardens of Le Suquet, reflecting what grows around the area
Previous pages: Freshly picked herbs, flowers and plants for the day's menu at Le Suquet

There is someone new in her cowshed. She takes her place at her milking station, marked by her name plate, and is soon joined by Noisette who seems indifferent to my company as she languidly chews some hay. The rest of the herd trot in to line up beside them, heads held high, while farmer Philippe Galvaing hurries them from behind.

These are Salers cows, a breed that thrives in the mountains of Cantal, one of France's most remote departments, in the south of the historical Auvergne region, where steep, volcanic mountains have shaped local traditions. I've come to witness the process that goes into making the rare salers tradition cheese. Only seven producers of this particular fromage remain — each only uses milk from their own single herd of Salers cows, which graze on the abundant meadows between mid-April and mid-November. What makes it extra special, though, is that Salers cows will only yield their milk when their calf is present — so, twice-daily the farmers allow the calf to feed before attaching their own milking apparatus. The cows produce just 3,000 litres a year, a third of which is consumed by the calf.

While it's undoubtedly hard work for Philippe and his family, the process has its benefits, as his daughter Louise explains. "Because we're manoeuvring the calves and the cows, there is a stronger bond between us. Sometimes they're not very friendly to start with, but the trust grows."

Once all the cows are in position, Philippe lets the calves come into the milking shed from their adjoining enclosure. As each small calf jostles through the gate, he yells its name — the same as its mother's — and it canters on gangly, unsure legs to the correct cow to feed. While Philippe and his son Pierre get on with the milking, Louise shows me around the dairy and explains how the cheese is made. The Galvaing family make just one wheel of salers tradition a day, albeit one 45cm thick and 48cm tall. The first step is to put the milk in a chestnut wood vat called a gerle, from which the bacteria adds a nutty dimension. But it's the milk that brings the most flavour. The volcanic soil means the meadows have an incredible biodiversity, which filters through to the milk and then the cheese. When Louise gives me a slice in their ageing cellar, I'm astonished by the floral notes — it's smooth but has a real tanginess.

Outside, the views of the meadows around the farm are spectacular; it's May and everything is vivid green, the grass dotted with yellow flowers. After saying my goodbyes to the Galvaings, I drive through the pretty village of Salers, beyond which there's another field of Salers cows, the distinct dongs of their cowbells carrying on the breeze. As the road begins to climb into the mountains, I pass a number of buron huts. These small stone cowherd dwellings are a feature of Cantal and the neighbouring departments of Aveyron

and Lozère, which all share a similar history of cheesemaking, and a tradition known as transhumance dating back to the Middle Ages. This sees locals lead their cows up to the higher meadows to feed on the grass and flowers. They'd then spend the season living in buron huts and making cheese in order to preserve the milk. The leftover whey would then be used to make tomme fraîche, a fresh, soft cheese cooked with potatoes to create Cantal's traditional dish, truffade.

With the evening light starting to fade, I follow the road into the mountains via a precipitous route called Le Puy Mary. And, as it rises and falls between the mountains, I'm struck by what a challenge this terrain must have posed those living here. When I arrive at the village of Pailherols, it's dark. I check into my auberge (inn), Hôtel Chez Marie, and within no time, I'm tucking into a hearty meal of Saint-Flour blonde lentils and local pork, made by owner Maryline Fages and served with husband Vincent's selection of wines from grapes grown within the area's volcanic soil. Vincent is keen to explain just how incredible the local landscape is; and with the morning light, all is revealed. The village is surrounded by meadows filled with as many yellow dandelions and cowslips as there are blades of grass; and there are the now-familiar stone-and-slate burons here too, these days used for farm buildings. It's a scene that must barely have changed in centuries.

Truffade versus aligot

About an hour's drive south east of Pailherols, the spa town of Chaudes-Aigues is set in a valley where the south of the Cantal mountain range meets the Aubrac Plateau. Along the town's long main street, several signposts direct me to the Source du Par, and I follow these to an archway that leads into a square where a stone trough collects the fast-flowing water pouring from a metal spout. The presence of steam rising from the water is a clue that this is a natural hot spring, with a temperature of 65°C. I sweep my hand underneath; it's almost scalding. I've been told a second source can be found further up the hill, so I follow the lane and soon find another spout set in a wall. This one is 82°C — one of the hottest in Europe — and it pours out thousands of litres a day.

That evening, at Restaurant Sodade, I finally get to try truffade, with some bonus guidance from chef Aurélien Gransagne. "The name comes from the historic word for potatoes, 'truffe'," he explains. "Purists say it should just be sliced potatoes cooked in pork fat, and then the tomme fraîche. Some people add parsley, others say absolutely not; some add onion or garlic, others say absolutely not." I order it as a side dish, accompanying a refined plate of local pork, served with creamed fennel and slender carrots. And, as I raise up a chunk of golden-hued potato with my fork, strings of cheese cling stubbornly to the rest of it in the

Elasticity is everything for aligot, with expert chefs able to pull it out of the saucepan in ribbons more than a metre in length

From left: Les Burons de Salers is one of several burons in the region that has been transformed into a restaurant; aligot served with salad; Jean-Louis Miquel demostrates the extent to which aligot can be stretched

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Left: James Gould, the gardener at Le Suquet, picking herbs and plants with the kitchen crew for the day

bowl. I quickly take a bite of the soft, cheesy potato; it's absolute heaven.

With its appealing elasticity, tomme fraîche is the crucial ingredient in truffade. It plays a similarly vital role in a speciality found over the border in the Occitanie region, in Aveyron. This dish is known as aligot. And, while it's made with pureed rather than sliced potato, it shares many similarities with truffade, having been traditionally produced in buron huts with tomme fraîche, albeit made from the whey of laguiole cheese, which comes from the milk of Aubrac cows. Elasticity is everything for aligot, with expert chefs able to pull it out of the saucepan in ribbons more than a metre in length. In fact, 'aligot master' Jean-Louis Miquel, employed by the local cheese cooperative Jeune Montagne, has achieved a record of six metres.

I visit the cooperative, in the town of Laguiole. There I learn aligot's first incarnation was as a bread-and-cheese soup served to 12th-century pilgrims on the Way of Saint James by a monastery on the Aubrac Plateau, the flatter area in the south of the Massif Central. Monks developed agriculture in the area, and when the tradition of transhumance emerged, the locals who took their cattle to higher pastures in summer made laguiole cheese in the burons. Aligot soon became their staple diet.

By 1960, however, so many people had left the land for jobs in the cities that cheesemaking and aligot production had almost disappeared. It was then a group of farmers set up the Jeune Montagne cooperative to encourage local people to stay in the area, and it's largely thanks to their efforts that aligot regained its popularity. Today, it supports 76 dairy farms in the cheese's official zone of production and is responsible for a renaissance of Aubrac cattle.

Aligot isn't only found in farmhouses or rustic restaurants. It also appears on the menu at Laguiole's fine-dining institution, Le Suquet. At the helm is chef Sébastien Bras, whose family put the Aubrac on the culinary map, first with his grandparents' auberge restaurant Lou Mazuc in Laguiole, and then via his father Michel Bras, who relocated it to a new site outside the town and renamed it Le Suquet. Sébastien wrote his own page of the restaurant's story in 2018, when he asked for it to be removed from the 2018 Michelin Guide, to be free of the pressure of holding a three-star rating. They obliged, but then the guide's management changed, and two stars were re-awarded in 2019, regardless of his wishes.

"My grandmother always served aligot in her restaurant. She was very traditional, she never weighed anything, it was all done on instinct," Sébastien explains. "When the restaurant gained its reputation for contemporary cuisine, we tried to take it off the menu but there was an outcry from the customers, so we keep it on. However, we might change it slightly, by, say, making pumpkin aligot or combining it with truffle."

Like his father's cuisine, Sébastien's is modern, yet it's also representative of the Aubrac Plateau, of the volcanic soil and its fabulous diversity of flora. "My father recognised the area has an incredible wealth of plants — and that no one had ever made the most of it, other than by grazing their Aubrac cows in the pastures." Michel Bras went on

Truffade

This version of the traditional dish was created by Aurélien Gransagne, head chef at Restaurant Sodade. Serve it as a side dish alongside Aubrac beef steak or sausages.

SERVES: 4 **TAKES: 45 MINS**

INGREDIENTS

160g cheese, ideally tomme fraîche de Cantal (or use 80g mozzarella and 80g gruyere), finely grated

15g lard

350g potatoes (UK varieties such as Desirée or Vivaldi), peeled and sliced into 5mm-thick rounds

METHOD

1. If using tomme fraîche, season the cheese with salt.
2. Melt the lard in a large, deep frying pan set over a low-medium heat. Add the potatoes and stir until all the rounds are covered in the melted fat, then stir occasionally until they're softened throughout and have taken on a yellow colour. Drain off any excess fat.
3. Sprinkle over the grated cheese. Stir well until the cheese melts and becomes stringy. Season to taste, then serve.

to develop a reputation for foraging, before establishing the restaurant's own garden. This enhanced Le Suquet's signature dish, gargouillou — a medley of young vegetables, leaves and flowers, gathered every morning. "It's a recipe that changes almost every day as it's almost entirely a plant-based dish. So at the beginning of April we'll see around 40 different plant varieties — then, every month from June, when the garden is at its peak, we have close to 80 varieties in a single plate."

Having been shown around the restaurant's garden by the head gardener, British expat James Gould, it's time to take a seat and try the gargouillou. When it's served, it looks like a piece of art on a plate. What's more, this dish of dazzling colours yields an equally broad array of flavours, alternating between sweetness, bitterness and nuttiness, with textures from crunchy and frilly to delicate.

Cyril Attrazic is another decorated chef of the Aubrac who, like Sébastien, is from impressive culinary stock. His eponymous restaurant gained its second Michelin star in 2023, and he's the fourth generation of his family to run a restaurant in the town of Peyre-en-Aubrac. As well as utilising the plant-based flavours provided by the Aubrac, Cyril is also passionate about the rearing of Aubrac beef. "These days, cooking is becoming more plant-based and the fashion is for vegan food," he says. "But here, this is land for livestock — so we're doing the opposite of the fashion and setting up our own beef farm."

Having accepted that the French are heavy consumers of beef, Cyril and his wife's family of breeders resolved to produce beef in what he believed was a more sustainable way. So, rather than exporting the males to Italy, they keep them for meat and fed them a Michelin-level diet of their own, including omega oils and mineral-rich cereals, as well as ensuring they get two summers in the pastures. Hearing this, I'm expecting my lunch to be heavily carnivorous — instead, it's an astonishing celebration of everything the Aubrac has to offer; from delicate vegetables and exquisite flowers to a sublime cut of beef that I slice with an elegant Laguiole knife — another emblem of the area. The side? A bowl of aligot of course — one so stretchy it comes with scissors.

Cyril's restaurant is in the department of Lozère, which also has its share of burons. And it's here that I finally get to dine in one, thus trying the local cheese in its traditional setting. The route to the Buron de Born takes me through rock-strewn meadows abounding with wild daffodils. The restaurant, set beside a lake, feels remote, yet inside it's busy with groups of friends and families, waiters spooning large dollops of velvety aligot onto their plates. I opt for the Lozère version of truffade — rétortillat — comprising layers of potato and tomme fraiche, with a touch of garlic. It's hearty, filling and delicious — and the final piece of proof that, with its cheese, meat, vegetables and flowers, the Aubrac has everything a food-lover could ever need. ▯

Above: Gargouillou is the signature dish at Le Suquet

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE
British Airways, EasyJet and Ryanair fly to Toulouse, a 3h40m drive from Salers, or 2h30m from Laguiole. Other airports that are closer to portions of this route include Brive, Montpellier and Rodez.

WHERE TO STAY
Chez Marie in Pailherols, from €77 (£65), room only. hotel-chezmarie.com
Hotel-Restaurant Sodade in Chaudes-Aigues, from €100 (£85), room only. sergevieira.com/fr/rooms-sodade.html
La Tarabelle near Bourgs-sur-Colagne in Lozère, from €80 (£70), B&B. chambre-hote-lozere.com

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DECONSTRUCT

BUTTER CHICKEN

This dish of spiced chicken in a creamy tomato sauce gained its popularity in the early days of newly independent India. It's now a fixture on Indian restaurant menus worldwide — and the subject of a fiercely contested lawsuit

WORDS: MALLIKA BASU. PHOTOGRAPHS: JAMIE ORLANDO SMITH.
FOOD STYLIST: FELICITY PRICE-THOMAS

Pieces of chicken, tossed in a simple spice marinade, lightly charred and then submerged in an unctuous, light, buttery, creamy tomato sauce. Butter chicken — or murgh makhani — is a dish so beloved, it's now ubiquitous on Indian restaurant menus the world over. Yet, it started life as a way of repurposing leftovers.

Traditionally, the dish would begin with tandoori chicken: bone-in meat coated in cumin, coriander, turmeric, chilli and garam masala, partially cooked in a tandoor (a hot clay oven) before later being flash-cooked in the tandoor a second time. Meat has been cooked in tandoor-style ovens in northwest India since around 2600-1900 BCE, according to archaeological finds, but butter chicken only evolved in the first half of the 20th century.

The dish came about in response to discerning restaurant customers who wouldn't countenance eating day-old tandoori chicken that was past its succulent best. As a solution, leftover pieces were dunked in the simplest of curries, whipped up quickly to disguise their dryness. The sauce was originally made with crushed fresh tomatoes and minimal spicing, including garam masala — a warming blend that would likely have included coriander, cumin and bay leaves — and a touch of chilli. Freshly churned butter was added to finish.

One of the challenges of the dish is creating perfect harmony between the tart tomatoes, creamy butter and bitter aromatics while maintaining a certain lightness — there should be neither excessive chilli heat nor heavy-handed sweetness. Meanwhile, the simplicity of the dish has led to many variations. Some add onion, ginger and garlic to the sauce. Others use honey for sweetness. Tinned tomato, passata and tomato puree have all featured instead of fresh tomatoes to provide uniform taste, tang and smoothness. Some recipes call for whole spices, some for ground spices, some for a mix of both. Creative chefs might incorporate melon seeds, cashews, almonds or smoked butter.

The specifics of butter chicken's origins are hotly contested, but the story is said to start at a restaurant called Moti Mahal, established in 1920 in Peshawar, in modern-day Pakistan. Two men, Kundan Lal Gujral and Kundan Lal Jaggi, worked here together before moving to Delhi following Partition in 1947. There, along with a businessman called Thakur Dass Mago, they opened a new restaurant, also named Moti Mahal, in Old Delhi's Daryaganj neighbourhood.

This is where the tale becomes a little hazier. According to the Jaggi family, Moti Mahal in Daryaganj is where butter chicken was invented late one night after a large group of diners arrived unexpectedly, demanding something curried to eat. However, according to Kundan Lal Gujral's grandson, Monish Gujral, his grandfather invented not just butter chicken but its predecessor, tandoori chicken, when he began using a tandoor — which had been reserved for making breads — to cook other savoury dishes, and the dish evolved from there. "My granddad invented butter chicken, or murgh makhani, out of necessity in the 1930s/40s," says Monish Gujral. "The kebabs were drying up and becoming inedible. He didn't want them to go to waste."

Whatever the truth of the matter, a host of dignitaries and VIPs were captivated by the dish, including Jawaharlal Nehru (the Indian prime minister from 1947 to 1964), his daughter Indira Gandhi (who herself became prime minister in 1966) and her high-profile sons. Butter chicken was propelled to stardom. Eventually, however, as the Indian capital's commercial centre shifted from Old Delhi to newer neighbourhoods, Moti Mahal in Daryaganj was sold and, in 2003, Monish Gujral set up a franchise operation, Moti Mahal Delux. Kundan Lal Gujral had been the public figurehead of the original Moti Mahal brand, and Monish picked up his grandfather's mantle, authoring several books, including *On the Butter Chicken Trail*, badged as being 'from the home of butter chicken'.

Following the death of Kundan Lal Jaggi in 2018, his grandson, Raghav Jaggi, decided to reclaim the family's stake in the legacy. In 2019 he teamed up with restaurateur and childhood friend Amit Bagga to open Daryaganj, a restaurant in Delhi's Aerocity neighbourhood

complete with the tagline, 'By the inventors of butter chicken and dal makhani' — the latter, a slow-cooked buttery black dal, being another dish the Gujrals claim to have invented in the original Moti Mahal in Peshawar. The menu comes with an explanation of the nuances of the original butter chicken recipe.

"There are three differences between the original butter chicken and what you get now," says Bagga. "It was bone-in chicken. There were no mixers or grinders, so the curry had texture. And there was no ready cream, so freshly churned cream and butter were used." Boneless butter chicken evolved as the younger generations preferred their meat off the bone, and along the way, fenugreek made its way into the recipe. Cubes of marinated thigh or breast meat have now become common, and the rise of the food processor has contributed to the popularity of a smooth sauce.

The Gujral and Jaggi families each maintain their respective relative was the true inventor of butter chicken — and in January 2024, Monish Gujral began legal proceedings in the Delhi High Court against the owners of Daryaganj restaurant for 'falsely' claiming to have invented butter chicken and dal makhani, seeking $240,000 (£188,970) in damages. Daryaganj's owners have rejected this, issuing a statement describing the lawsuit as 'misconceived, baseless and lacking cause of action'. At the time of writing, the case rumbles on.

The result of the lawsuit may, however, be irrelevant — the 'invention' stories have been met with doubt by many, including academic and food historian Pushpesh Pant. "Meat has been cooked in a tandoor since Vedic and Indus Valley times [1500-500 BCE and 2600-1900 BCE, respectively]," he says. "Butter chicken existed in many forms in other places in India. This isn't even a Punjabi claim, let alone a restaurant claim."

Another story commonly touted is that of India's first education minister, Abul Kalam Azad, telling the shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi: "If you visit Delhi and don't taste the butter chicken of Moti Mahal, it's like visiting Agra and missing the Taj Mahal." According to Pant, it's highly unlikely this was said, as two Muslims wouldn't be extolling the virtues of a non-halal dish in this manner. Regardless, in the decades that followed, new entrepreneurs commercialised butter chicken, and it became commonplace on North Indian restaurant menus in Delhi.

Yet, butter chicken's true origins remain difficult to prove. Both the Kundan Lals have passed away and the Indian courts are notoriously snail-paced. More importantly, though, does anyone care? The fact the 'original' Delhi dish has spawned hundreds of different variations, as well as pizzas, pies, samosas and more, suggests not.

Entrepreneurs like Saransh Goila, whose company, Goila Butter Chicken, was the first butter chicken brand not associated with Moti Mahal, adds the untraditional ingredients of smoked tomatoes and cashews to make his version extra rich, creamy and smoky. In Manchester, Mel Kumar and her husband use makhani sauce in multiple ways at their restaurant, Original Third Eye, including with tandoori chicken either on or off the bone, and with tandoori lamb chops. "We also serve on demand makhan vegetables, makhan paneer, makhan aloo… We can add anything to the sauce," Kumar says.

When restaurateur Iqbal Wahhab put butter chicken on the menu at his London restaurant, Cinnamon Club, 23 years ago, having tasted the Moti Mahal version with his then-chef Vivek Singh, it was so popular that one in three diners were ordering it. Singh has now taken over Cinnamon Club and the wider Cinnamon Collection group, and says the dish is still in regular rotation on his menus. "Butter chicken is important at a deeper level. It combines salt, fat, acid, heat with smoke and herbaceous fenugreek with a hug, bite and kick rolled into one," he says. "No wonder everyone loves it."

Dried fenugreek (kasuri methi) adds a bitter floral edge to butter chicken. If you don't have any to hand, increase the amount of garam masala, adding a pinch at a time until the flavours taste balanced

TIMELINE

1930s
Tandoori chicken served at Moti Mahal in Peshawar (now in Pakistan), where Kundan Lal Gujral and Kundan Lal Jaggi worked.

1949
Moti Mahal opens in Old Delhi's Daryaganj quarter, where butter chicken is popularised.

2003
Monish Gujral, grandson of Moti Mahal co-founder Kundan Lal Gujral, launches the Moti Mahal Delux franchise.

2016
Saransh Goila launches Goila Butter Chicken, the first butter chicken brand not associated with Moti Mahal, as a takeaway in Mumbai.

2019
Kundal Lal Jaggi's grandson Raghav Jaggi opens Daryaganj restaurant in Delhi with Amit Bagga.

2020
Saransh Goila appears on *MasterChef Australia* and brings Goila Butter Chicken to the UK. His London pop-up has since closed, but the brand still operates in the UK as a delivery service.

2023
Taste Atlas names butter chicken among the top 10 chicken dishes in the world and top 10 food or drink in India.

2024
Monish Gujral takes legal action against Daryaganj; the case is still ongoing.

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Mallika Basu's butter chicken recipe

This recipe from my home keeps as true to the taste of the original Delhi butter chicken as possible, while incorporating hacks for home cooking. The passata adds strong tomato flavour and colour, while the oven mimics the tandoor. Pick a high-quality garam masala, or powder the seeds of two cardamom pods to give it oomph. You can make the chicken in advance and prepare the sauce before serving.

SERVES: 4-6 **TAKES: 40 MINS PLUS STRAINING AND MARINATING**

INGREDIENTS

250g Greek-style yoghurt
750g boneless chicken thigh fillets, quartered
3 tbsp neutral oil

FOR THE MARINADE

2.5cm piece ginger, peeled and grated
6 garlic cloves, peeled and grated
1 tsp chilli powder
1 tsp paprika or smoked paprika
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp ground cumin
½ tsp garam masala
1 tsp lemon juice
1 tsp salt

FOR THE SAUCE

500g passata
½ tsp chilli powder
75ml single cream, room temperature
50g salted butter, chilled
½ tsp dried fenugreek leaves
½ tsp caster sugar
½ tsp garam masala
ground seeds of two green cardamom pods (optional)
hot buttered naan, to serve

METHOD

① Put the yoghurt on a muslin, then bring the corners together and tie to the kitchen tap for up to 2 hrs, letting the whey drip into a bowl underneath; this will give you strained yoghurt.
② Place the quartered chicken thighs in a large mixing bowl with the hung curd and all the marinade ingredients. Mix well, then cover and leave to marinate overnight in the fridge. Discard the whey.
③ When you're ready to cook, remove the chicken from the fridge and allow it to come to room temperature. Line a baking tray with foil.
④ Heat oven to 240C, 220C fan, gas 9. Massage the oil into the marinated chicken pieces, then thread them onto metal skewers — use three large skewers or five small ones (wearing rubber gloves will help with grip and prevent hands from staining).
⑤ Put the skewers on a rack on the lined baking tray or suspend them between the edges of the tray (depending on the length of the skewers and the size of the tray), then place the whole thing on the top shelf of the oven. Cook for 25 mins, carefully turning every 8 mins or so until the chicken is nearly cooked and some charred bits are visible.
⑥ Remove from the oven and put the chicken skewers on a plate. Reserve any juices in the pan, loosening them up with a wooden spoon as best you can.
⑦ For the sauce, tip the passata and chilli powder into a heavy-bottomed saucepan or kadai (Indian cooking bowl) and bring to a bubble on a high heat. Half-fill the passata jar or carton with warm water and pour it into the saucepan, then mix and lower the heat to medium. Use a sieve to strain any reserved juices from the baking tray into the sauce.
⑧ Slide the chicken off the skewers into the curry sauce. Mix in well to coat. Lower the heat to a simmer, then add in the single cream. Once incorporated, add the chilled butter. Crush the fenugreek leaves with your hand while the butter melts, then stir them through with the sugar. Taste and add salt, if needed. Mix in the garam masala and cardamom powder (if using) and serve with hot buttered naan.

WHERE TO EAT

From Delhi to Birmingham, here are some of the best places to enjoy butter chicken

HAVEMORE, DELHI
A Pandara Road stalwart, this spot was established in 1959, and today long queues form outside on busy evenings. While some diners may not agree with the sweetness and lightness of the sauce, the restaurant's fan base speaks for itself. Expect low frills, a relaxed ambience and mid-range prices in this upmarket, tourist-friendly part of Delhi. And if it's too busy, head next door to Gulati, whose butter chicken is equally highly rated. havemorerestaurants.in

MINAR, DELHI
This North Indian restaurant in Connaught Place is known for its intimate setting, traditional vibe, brisk trade and sometimes brusque service. The butter chicken, though, is one of the best in the city — and it's even more affordable than at the establishments around Pandara Road. The kebabs come recommended, too, particularly the mutton burra. The restaurant has a second branch, called New Minar, where butter chicken is also on the menu. L-11, Connaught Circle, Block L, Connaught Place

DARYAGANJ, DELHI & SURROUNDS
With seven locations in and around Delhi, Daryaganj has two butter chicken options on the menu: the 1947 version, tipped as the 'original recipe of Kundan Lal Jaggi', as well as 'today's butter chicken', a more modern, boneless variety. Both are made with high-quality ingredients, while the venues themselves come with a high-end ambience and mid-range prices. daryaganj.com

MOTI MAHAL, DELHI
Delhi's original Moti Mahal site has plenty of admirers and, while it's now under different owners, it still describes itself as the home of butter chicken, as well as tandoori chicken, mutton burra and dal makhani. The decor and location have old-world charm, while the restaurant serves two versions of butter chicken — bone in or out — cooked in a rich tomato gravy with butter and cream. instagram.com/moti_mahal_daryaganj

PUNJAB RESTAURANT, LONDON
The UK's oldest Punjabi restaurant, this Covent Garden area establishment is reminiscent of the dhabas (roadside eateries) of Northern India, complete with brisk service, bright lighting and affordable prices. It's always packed with diners, who come for home-style food, dhaba favourites and the butter chicken (pictured). The latter contains tandoori chicken on the bone and a lightweight sauce so moreish you'll have to stop yourself from drinking it. The saag paneer and kali dal are must-orders, too. punjab.co.uk

ORIGINAL THIRD EYE, MANCHESTER
North Indian and Nepalese husband-and-wife team Arun and Mel Kumar opened Original Third Eye to showcase their family recipes. Arun's father Sudagar Mal used to work at Moti Mahal and passed on the original butter chicken recipe to Arun, who scooped prizes at both the Nation's Curry Awards 2024 and English Curry Awards 2023. originalthirdeye.com

TANDOOR AT THE CHAMBERS, ESSEX
This Buckhurst Hill spot dishes up classic Punjabi tandoor cooking in a pretty setting adorned with flowers. The butter chicken features succulent pieces of boneless meat, along with the untraditional — but not unwelcome — additions of vegetables and turmeric sauce. The chefs also claim to have invented kale chaat — crispy, gram flour-battered fried kale doused with sweet yoghurt, tamarind and green chutneys, topped with chaat masala. tandooratthechambers.co.uk

THE COVERED WAGON, BIRMINGHAM
Birmingham's desi pubs are famous for their menus of Punjabi classics and grilled meats, and the Covered Wagon is among the best, winning numerous awards since it opened seven years ago. The head chef undertook his traineeship at Moti Mahal, but puts his own spin on butter chicken with a version that contains cashews, sugar and 'a few secret ingredients'. thecoveredwagon.co.uk ▯

IMAGE: PUNJAB RESTAURANT

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KEEP THE HOME

KLEFTIKO, COOKED OUTDOORS IN A CLAY OVEN, IS THE FOCUS OF A FAMILY FEAST IN CYPRUS'S MOUNTAINS, JUST AS IT HAS BEEN FOR GENERATIONS

FIRES BURNING

WORDS: FARIDA ZEYNALOVA
PHOTOGRAPHS: KAROLINA WIERCIGROCH

Brushing past an 80-year-old bay tree, I follow the heady scent of smoky rose. Flora's family are in the garden, chatting over a big pot of goat in a wood-fired clay oven. Preparations for kleftiko — a slow-roasted dish of lamb or goat — are well underway.

The morning sun shines through the canopy of vines above our heads. Andreas, Flora's husband, grabs a tiny terracotta cup in which Diamanto, Flora's cousin, carefully places a few cubes of incense. "In Cyprus, before we cook something, we burn coal, olive leaves and rose incense to bring good luck," says Diamanto, as a westerly wind wafts the fragrant smoke up my nose. Andreas gestures to the forest-cloaked mountains above, explaining that the incense comes from the Holy Monastery of Panagia Trikoukiotissa in nearby Prodromos, the highest village in Cyprus.

Flora and Andreas Karpi are my lunch hosts in Fyti, a sleepy village of just 80 inhabitants on a plateau in the Paphos region of western Cyprus. Married for 44 years, they have three children and four grandchildren. Andreas is retired, while Flora works at Paphos Airport. We're also joined by Eirini, Diamanto's mother.

All three women are proudly wearing colourfully patterned aprons handwoven by Eirini herself. Both she and her son work at the Fyti Weaving Museum, where they create textiles with fythkiotika, a traditional style of embroidery unique to the village. The family's clay oven, built by Flora's great-grandfather and used by every generation since, is just as steeped in tradition. The goat, the centrepiece of today's lunch, has been cut into large chunks and seasoned with salt, cinnamon, dried oregano and freshly picked bay leaves. Andreas expertly places the pot inside the oven using a long wooden shovel. The garden hearth remains the family's preferred method of cooking, year-round.

It takes around six hours for kleftiko to reach its softest, most succulent state. So, as the incense burns out, we leave the goat to its slow cooking process, and head into the kitchen to make dessert. All except Eirini, who takes off her apron, rests her wooden cane against the wall and settles into an armchair. Cindy, the family dog appears at her feet for another morning nap.

Flora's house — which belonged to her maternal grandmother — has been kept largely the same for decades. Just above the kitchen table is a framed photo of her parents, and original wooden cabinets, floral wall tiles and off-white lace curtains all serve as tokens of remembrance. Shelves, fridge-top and coffee tables are lined with decorative wooden lamps, fythkiotika cloths and Greek Orthodox icons of Jesus and the Virgin Mary.

While Flora rummages around the cupboards, Andreas hands me a coffee — black, stronger than life itself, topped with 'kaimaki', a golden-brown froth. The coffee cup has been in the family for over 45 years, he tells me with a slight British twang — his accent is the result of moving to the UK when he was six, when his parents opened fish and chip shops in London and Birmingham.

Clockwise from top left: Eirini with a cup of Greek Cypriot coffee; Eirini, Diamanto and Flora prepare the goat kleftiko in the kitchen; pastitsio, a Greek pasta dish also known as makaronia tou fournou in Cyprus; driving to the village of Fyti

Previous pages, from left: Diamanto, Flora and Eirini firing up the clay oven; ripe oranges in the garden; coal, rose incense and olive leaves burned for good luck

"I came back here when I was 25 to get married and raise a family," says Andreas, and Flora chips in: "These days, everyone is always running around and so busy, but we want the family to grow up knowing each other. We eat together very often."

Flora starts scooping small balls of dough to make loukoumades — the fried, crisp, syrup-soaked doughnuts popular across Greece and Cyprus. She drops each perfect sphere in a pot of boiling sunflower oil with the ease of someone who's done this countless times. Nothing makes her happier than watching her grandchildren enjoy her food, she tells me. Their go-to dish is makaronia tou fournou, which she says she makes at least once a week, gesturing to the one currently baking in the kitchen oven. Better known in Greece as pastitsio, it's a pasta bake with beef, bechamel sauce and tomato paste, which Flora makes with pork (as do most Cypriots) and seasons with cinnamon, pepper and mint.

While we chat, the kitchen hums and steams with activity. Bubbling on stoves, cooling on worktops and roasting in ovens is a showcase of Cypriot dishes. Along with the loukoumades and makaronia tou fournou, there's also koupepia (vine leaves stuffed with minced pork, onion, rice, tomatoes and mint) and kullourouthkia (swirls of dough stewed in a molasses of grape juice).

As she juggles multiple tasks at once, Flora regales me with family stories, including one about a dish her mother made with roast goat, potatoes and fresh tomatoes. "She made the paste by adding salt to fresh tomatoes and leaving them out in the sun to dry. The smell, the taste, there's really nothing like it," she says. Then, suddenly: "Now, let's go to Polemi!" she says, untying her apron, indicating it's time for an excursion.

To my astonishment, we're going to the neighbouring village, Polemi, to buy yet more food. Apparently, more people will be joining the family meal later. Due to Fyti's lack of facilities — there's no school or grocery shop — Flora often makes the 10-minute drive over to Polemi for basic supplies. While Andreas and Eirini watch over the kitchen, Flora, Diamanto and I hop in the car and judder along the bumpy road out of Fyti.

"We had no television growing up — we used to play in the fields, do embroidery," Flora tells me when I ask her what it was like in Fyti when she was a child. "It wasn't like now — there were no mobile phones, we only had one telephone in the village square."

The chat quickly returns — as most conversations seem to in the Karpi household — to the goat. Flora says they're making enough for the weekend because Monday marks the first day of Lent on the Greek Orthodox calendar. For 40 days from Green or 'Clean' Monday, meat, eggs and dairy are prohibited. It's a public holiday and the family will celebrate by having a plant-based picnic. But before then: a feast of goat.

In Polemi, we pick up milk, green apples, kouloumbra (kohlrabi) and mpiskota me indokarido (biscuits with coconut) from a convenience shop before heading to the bakery, where owner Anastasia has been making bread for more than 30 years. We buy a bag of freshly made koulouri, a local bread seasoned with cumin and aniseed. It's still comfortingly warm when Anastasia hands it to me.

Clockwise from top left: An orange tree in the Karpi family garden; freshly fried loukoumades; a wooden door to a typical home in the Old Town of Paphos; homemade tahinopita and honey served at a house in Fyti

FLAVOURS OF CYPRUS

Daktyla

These long, crisp, fried pastries, literally called 'fingers' in Greek, are filled with cinnamon, almonds and sugar and drenched in syrup that's flavoured with anthonero (orange blossom water). You'll find them in shops and bakeries all over the island but eat with caution — they're dangerously moreish.

Anari

Halloumi is synonymous with Cyprus, but anari, a ricotta-style cheese made from sheep or goat's milk, is another local favourite. White, creamy and delicately sweet, it's great for breakfast with either honey or carob syrup. To learn how halloumi and anari are made, head to Sofia and Andreas Traditional House in Letymbou village, a short drive from Fyti.

Soujoukkos

A sweet treat of nuts, usually almonds or walnuts, wrapped in palouze, a waxy jelly made by boiling the juice of surplus grapes during wine season. The nuts are threaded onto string, dipped into the juice and hung out to dry for several hours, and the sweet takes its name from a type of sausage thanks to its shape. Swing by Elena Markantoni's workshop in Arsos, Limassol District, to sample some delicious homemade varieties.

Koupes

Given Cyprus's proximity to the Levant, there are plenty of similarities between Cypriot and Middle Eastern food. Koupes, commonly known as kibbeh in Syria and Lebanon, are fried pastries made from bulgur wheat and stuffed with ground meat, onions, parsley and plenty of spices. They're a popular hot snack sold at street food stalls across Cyprus.

Andreas makes a toast as friends and family take their seats in the kitchen

On our return, Flora heads back to the kitchen, while Diamanto takes me on a quick tour of the village. First, we head to Fyti Weaving Museum, where Eirini appears, almost out of nowhere, to demonstrate her embroidery skills. As we explore the surrounding streets, villagers invite us in to taste homemade sweet treats. Before I've finished eating galatoboureko (custard-filled filo pie) at one friendly neighbour's house, another has opened their door beckoning for me to try their ravani (semolina cake) and tahinopita (tahini sweet bread).

It's a lively scene, but Fyti is a village that used to be far livelier. There's a closed taverna on the village corner and a derelict distillery that once made zivania, Cyprus's potent brandy. But the Karpi-Diomidous family is determined to entice life back to the village. Flora wants to open a new taverna, and they have plans to lobby the government to bring school children to Fyti so they can learn the art of weaving.

Back at the house, the goat is finally out of the oven and several tables have been pushed together to create a canteen-style dining room. The main dishes are already on display, along with tahini, hummus, taramasalata, kouloumbra, roast potatoes and olives seasoned with oregano and coriander seeds (possibly the best olives I've ever had). There's a carafe of wine at either end of the table and a special bottle of red in the middle, made using indigenous maratheftiko grapes by Tsangarides Winery in the local village of Lemona.

"Kalispera!" a voice suddenly booms behind me, as Eleni Parpouna, another of Flora's cousins, arrives clutching a gargantuan tray of homemade baklava with pistachio, honey, walnuts and olive oil. The next 20 minutes are a blur as more friends and family fill the kitchen to join the festivities, before we sit down to eat.

Diamanto serves me kleftiko followed by the fried potatoes, bread and a refreshing salad of cabbage, cucumber and peppers. Flora appears from behind me, puts a slice of makaronia tou fournou on my plate and pours me a glass of wine. My first bite is of the goat, which is smoky, flavourful and velvety soft, melting the second it hits my mouth.

Conversations crisscross the table — pinballing between Greek, English and Gringlish — ranging from wine-making machinery to the impending frivolities of Paphos Carnival later today. As I near the end of my plate, I let out a satisfied puff of air when Eleni's husband Kyriakos interjects: "If you go to a Cypriot home and finish the food, it's not good, it makes us feel uncomfortable. Which is why we always make more than we need." Moments later, more goat appears on my plate.

After dinner, Flora, Diamanto and Eleni clear the table to make room for dessert. Amid the clanging of plates and pans, Eirini is fast asleep on the armchair. A buffet of halvas (semolina pudding with almonds), loukoumades, baklava, kullourouthkia and koulourakia me to meli (Greek biscuits sprinkled with sesame seeds), arrives while Andreas makes more coffee. "This isn't anything extraordinary" he says. "It's just what we do when the family gets together."

Just then, Flora walks by with a tray of kleftiko for tomorrow's gathering. "Right, time to sit down for some more food," says Andreas. I think he's joking, although, after today, it's hard to tell. ▯

HOW TO DO IT: TUI offers seven nights at TUI Blue Pioneer Beach Hotel in Paphos on a B&B basis, including flights from Gatwick, from £735 per person. Prices may vary. tui.co.uk

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BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

ONE SIP AT A TIME

Snaking through the south of Bosnia and Herzegovina, between Mostar and Trebinje, the Herzegovina Wine Route is the ideal way to explore the region's striking karst landscape, moving from vineyard to vineyard, tasting a wide range of traditional dishes and exceptional local wines

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS:
NICK ST OEGGER

Starogа Grada oko Staroga Mosta u Mostaru

The route begins in Mostar, named the European Wine City Dionisio 2024. The city's old town has been carefully restored, with its winding cobblestone streets home to Ottoman houses serving traditional Bosnian coffee and sweets, and the ateliers of craftspeople who work with leather and copper. A 20-minute car journey away, in the mountains behind the city, lies the village of Goranci, where, at Restoran Goranci, you can expect traditional meals such as slow-roasted veal and grah, a Bosnian bean stew, with potato bread and hurda (a local cheese curd). If Mostar marks the start of the wine route, the end point is the country's southernmost city, Trebinje (right), where the nearby karst fields, known as Popovo Polje, are considered some of the best agricultural terrain in the country, and where several wineries have their vineyards.

Преображење Господње

The Church of The Holy Transfiguration of God (left) is one of Trebinje's most striking buildings. Religion has played a key role in the region's wine production — the nearby Tvrdoš Monastery is one of the largest wine producers in the country. Meanwhile, just outside the city, Household Kovačević is a family-run business producing over a ton of honey every year from its nearly 100 hives, plus cheese, rakija (a Balkan fruit brandy) and other organic products. When temperatures rise in summer, the family take their hives on the road to the mountains in northern Bosnia or neighbouring Montenegro. Different varieties of honey are produced depending on where the bees have been living — honey produced in the forest has earthier pine tones, while honey from the fields has more of a herbal flavour.

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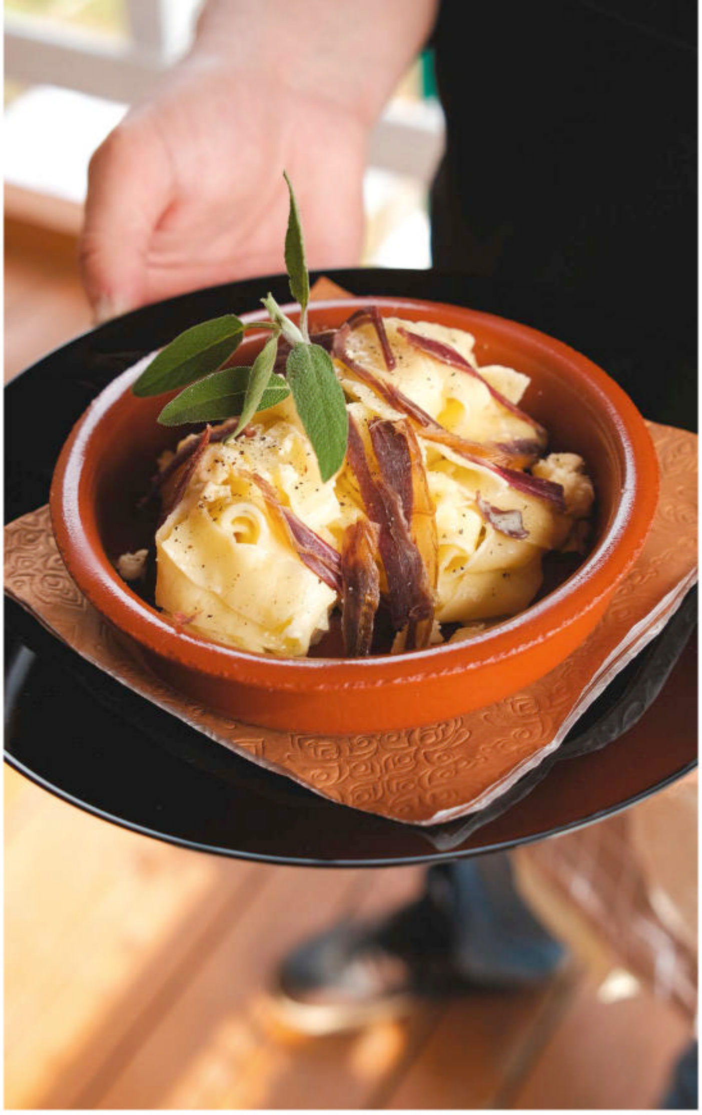
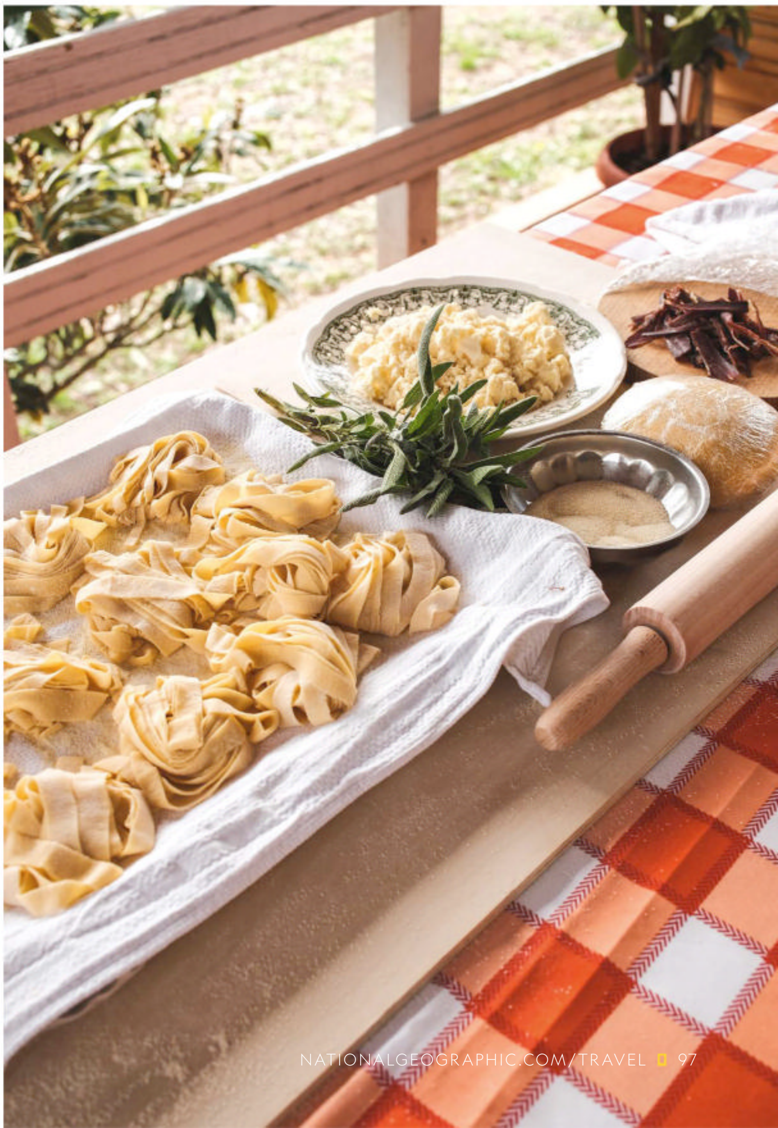
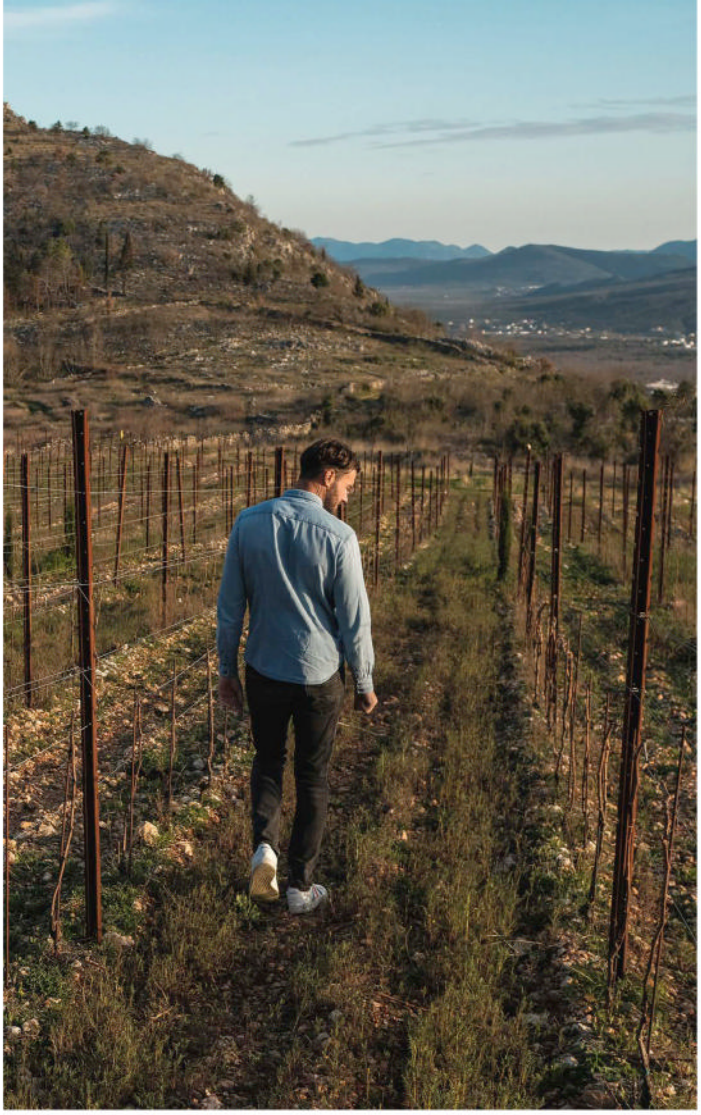


Compared to the rest of Bosnia, the Herzegovina region is rich in agricultural land, owing to the good climate and mineral-rich soil. During spring and summer, it's common to see roadside stalls selling the produce of this landscape in the shape of seasonal fruits and vegetables, direct from local farmers. The town of Stolac and the surrounding region is home to a pasta dish known as stolački jarišti. It's made with fresh sage, which is briefly submerged in sizzling butter. The pasta is then tossed into the mix together with sir iz mijeha, a local cheese fermented in a special sheepskin sack, as well as goat meat dried by shepherds in the nearby mountains.





2022
Krš Orange
Žilavka

At Nuić Winery, near Ljubuški, the vineyards are planted with three local grape varieties — blatina, žilavka and trnjak. Nuić is known for bringing the trnjak grape back from the brink of extinction and is one of only a few wineries producing a standalone wine from this variety. At the winery's tastings, they serve a selection of local cheeses, salads and pastries. Nearby, Ivan Nizić walks among the newly planted vineyards on the grounds of the Škegro Family Winery, where the soil is mineral rich, but difficult to work with due to the rocky top layer. Orange Žilavka is one of Škegro's signature wines — also known as a skin contact wine, orange wines are made when the skins of white grapes are left on during the fermentation process, creating a distinct colour and flavour.

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BUSAN

Leading the way

Discover Busan's first Michelin-starred restaurants, an exciting part of the city's emerging food scene. Word: Chris Tharp

Clockwise from left: Dishes at Palate restaurant, run by chef Kim Jaehoon; Haeundae Beach, Busan's most famous beach; fresh produce for sale at a market in Nampo-dong

South Korea's most popular seaside city, Busan, is beginning to make a name for itself as a culinary hotspot. This beachside metropolis of 3.5 million people is renowned nationwide for its fresh seafood and signature pork soup, *dwaeji gukbap*, but now, a new generation of restaurateurs are determined to put the city on the global map as a world-class fine-dining destination.

The availability of fresh fish and other great local ingredients is key to Busan's offering. Combine this with talented homegrown chefs and stunning views of either the ocean or the mountains and you have the recipe for some truly exceptional restaurants. What's more, the city has finally caught the attention of some big players located outside of Korea, including Michelin, which launched a Seoul and Busan guide in 2024, incorporating 43 of Busan's restaurants, three of which received stars.

This stamp of approval from the exclusive culinary guide has been a welcome gust of wind in the sails for Busan's up-and-coming chefs, a recognition of the years of hard work and inventiveness necessary to carve out a place among the world's leading restaurants. For the best taste of the city's creative culinary offerings, check out the three recipients of Michelin stars in Busan, along with a neighbourhood favourite also recommended by the 2024 guide.

1 PALATE

While chef Kim Jaehoon was born and raised in Busan, it's in Sydney that he gained his expertise. "I picked this space because it reminds me of Sydney," he says, motioning towards Gwangan Bridge, the local marina and the shimmering high-rise apartments visible through Palate's wall of windows. "Life was tough there. I sometimes worked 18 or even 20 hours a day, and the cost of living was unbelievable."

Palate's third-floor space is bright and elegant, with just a handful of tables, ensuring each guest receives Kim's full attention. He often works as host and server, in addition to being the mastermind behind one of Busan's most groundbreaking restaurants.

Trained in the French tradition, Kim designs his menus with a European sensibility while maintaining a connection to Korea and East Asia. This approach is

IMAGES: PALATE; ALAMY

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evident in his Korean white radish pie, *chawanmushi* (Japanese steamed custard) and cocktails made from traditional mushroom liquor. "I want to share what I've experienced and learned through the menu," he says. "We change things according to the seasons and put a lot of emphasis on using seasonal ingredients depending on the weather and temperature."

Kim's creativity and willingness to take risks may be what convinced the Michelin inspectors that Palate deserved the star distinction. While the chef is honoured by the nod, he's also confident that this star will help expand Busan's food scene as a whole. "Busan is a beautiful city on the sea," he says. "People are drawn to the place, and now that Michelin has come around, I firmly believe that the local food culture will develop further over the next few years."

2 MORI

Though Busan is home to plenty of Japanese restaurants, Mori stands out due to chef Kim Wan-gyu's flair and attention to detail. His creations achieve a perfect harmony of flavours, with a deep emphasis on presentation. Each course features pleasing colours and arrangements, meaning dishes don't just taste great, but look wonderful too.

Situated on the city's Haeundae Beach, Mori's second-floor location affords a view of the ocean that complements the seafood that forms the backbone of each course. There's no set menu, meaning each meal is a unique experience created by Kim and his wife.

"We follow a monthly plan, but things can change based on the weather, what's in season and what's available in the market," says Kim. "Today we have small octopus, sea cucumber, hairtail and hairy crab, but also Japanese Spanish mackerel, which suddenly becomes available because it's now spring in Busan." This idea of expecting the unexpected is part of what makes Mori so distinct. Visitors know whatever they order will be created with thoughtfulness, precision and expertise — part of why the restaurant earned its Michelin star.

3 FIOTTO

Specialising in pasta, Fiotto is where quality ingredients are the star of the show. Located in Mipo near the eastern end of Haeundae Beach, this restaurant, owned and operated by a husband and wife, is the only one in the city to earn two Michelin distinctions: one star for its high-quality cooking and a Green star, recognising its commitment to sustainability practices.

From left: A dish at Fiotto, located in the Mipo neighbourhood; shellfish for sale at Jagalchi Fish Market

IMAGES: XXXXXXXX; XXXXXXXXXX

IMAGES: FIOTTO; ALAMY

Much of what ends up on the table at Fiotto comes from the owners' family's small farm in North Gyeongsang Province. "Most of our vegetables are from the farm," says co-owner chef Lee Dong-ho. "Many of our dishes are vegetable-based, meaning our customers will always experience the freshest and best-quality ingredients."

When the owners can't source things directly from their family's plot of land, they're dedicated to keeping it local, ensuring all their rice, flour, pork and duck are sourced within a three-hour drive away. "Everything is local except for the oil, butter and cheese," says Lee. "We're one of the only places in Busan doing farm-to-table dining, which I think is one of the reasons we attracted the attention of Michelin." They also use fermentation techniques to make pickles, kimchi and vinegar, all of which make regular appearances on the menu.

4 CHA AE JEON HALMAE KALGUKSU

In South Korea, many restaurants showcase an image of their chef, letting visitors know that they take a great pride in their restaurant, which almost always translates into outstanding dishes. Situated on a nondescript side street in Busan's midtown Yeonsan neighbourhood, Cha Ae Jeon Halmae Kalguksu's sign features an image of Cha Ae Jeon, who opened the legendary noodle shop in 1982. And for a good reason — its *kalguksu* (knife-cut noodle soup) is among the best in a city — which is really saying something, given Busan is a real hotspot for this staple dish.

The simplicity and inventiveness of Cha Ae Jeon Halmae Kalguksu is what sets the restaurant apart from its competitors. There are just three items on its menu: *halmae kalguksu* (the signature noodle soup), as well as *bibim kalguksu* (cold noodles in a spicy sauce) and *kong kalguksu* (noodles in a cold, thick, stone-ground soybean broth, only available in the summer). The restaurant's noodles are freshly prepared on site and the anchovy-based broth used for the *kalguksu* is light and savoury, with just a hint of sweetness. However, the restaurant's garnish on its *bibim kalguksu* is its selling point: a mound of chopped kimchi and fresh onions added to the soup to give the dish a rich, peppery, pungent flavour.

Cha Ae Jeon Halmae Kalguksu's inclusion in the Michelin Guide is a nod to Busan's rich tradition of inexpensive neighbourhood joints serving exceptional fare.

PLAN YOUR TRIP

There are daily direct flights from Heathrow to Seoul's Incheon International Airport. From there, it's a one-hour flight to Busan or a three-hour high-speed train journey from Seoul Station. While in Busan, the Visit Busan Pass is great for navigating the city, with free use of the city tour bus. For more details, visit *visitbusan.net*

Play. Work. Live
BUSAN

NAPLES

The gateway to the Amalfi Coast is the place for gourmet pizza, reimaginings of classics pastas and a wide range of street food

WORDS: ANDREA STRAFILE

According to the Neapolitan proverb '*meglio murì sazzio ca campà diùno*', it's better to die full than live hungry. Eating and drinking here is a ritual that's been linking the city's neighbourhoods for centuries — in the streets in the form of pizza al portafoglio, on the tables of trattorias as a plate of pasta, potatoes and provola cheese and at the counter of bars serving espresso all day long. Neapolitan food is part of the vitality of the city, and one of its defining aspects.

Naples is also the Italian city that's evolved most in recent decades, notably when it comes to its food and drink. Diners enjoy an endless array of options, including fusion food, fine dining and Neapolitan street food — the latter a smorgasbord spanning such delicacies as the panino napoletano (a soft-bread sandwich filled with cured meats and cheeses), parigina (stuffed pizza) and fried pizza from restaurants such as of La Masardona on Piazza Vittoria.

Neapolitan chefs who flexed their muscles overseas are returning. Among them are Marco Ambrosino, whose Mediterranean restaurant, Sustanza, opened last May, and Gianluca D'Agostino — previously of London's Locanda Locatelli — with his fun new restaurant and tapas bar, Joca.

Nothing, of course, will usurp pizza as the traditional soul of Naples, but new chefs are doing their best to aid its evolution. At Bro Pizzeria, a family of *pizzaioli* (pizza makers) has spent five generations perfecting the crispest crust. Standout varieties include cosacca (topped with tomato sauce and pecorino) and seasonal pizzas such as the assoluto di zucca, topped with pumpkin cooked four ways.

Neapolitan cuisine began as a blend of ideas and ingredients, the result of centuries of interchange between people coming and going from this once-powerful port city. It was here that the South American tomato became the most Italian of fruits. Today, Chinese and Japanese cuisines are being grafted with Neapolitan dishes to produce, perhaps surprisingly, perfect fusion food. For example, Mimì Alla Ferrovia, one of Naples' historic trattorias, serves ragù alla Genovese in a bao bun filled with five-hour-stewed beef, topped with a mustard- and basil-infused caesar sauce.

Yes, this is the gateway to the Amalfi Coast and the archeological site of Pompeii, but Naples is also a city that's fast transforming into one of the world's most intriguing gastronomic destinations, a place to be discovered bite by bite while orderly chaos and baroque wonders unfold around you.

From left: Oyster with hippocras spiced wine, saffron and sumac at Sustanza; the cafe courtyard at Hotel Piazza Bellini in Naples' historic center

IMAGES: LETIZIA CIGLIUTTI; AWL IMAGES

A DAY IN

SANITÀ & THE HISTORIC CENTRE

On the northern fringes of the city's historic centre, Sanità — once a run-down district — has experienced a renaissance through food. Over the past 10 years, new restaurants, such as Ciro Oliva's Pasticceria Poppella pizzeria and Isabella De Cham Pizza Fritta, have started to bring in Neapolitans and tourists, reshaping Sanità's character, while pizza place Concettina ai Tre Santi began a policy of only employing from the immediate area and funding cookery classes for underprivileged local children.

Breakfast is a must at **Pasticceria Poppella**, which sells a modern classic of Neapolitan pastries, the fiocco di neve ('snowflake'), icing sugar-dusted dough balls filled with ricotta.

Explore busy streets and alleys including Via San Gregorio Armeno, where you can buy a cornetto, the Neapolitan chilli-shaped good luck charm which adorns everything from keyrings to jewellery. Walk towards the **Duomo di Napoli**, which houses the revered relic of San Gennaro. Across the street you'll find **Januarius**, a trattoria that recently earned its first Michelin star. It's noted for its traditional Campania-style cuisine, including zito spezzato alla genovese (pasta in a rich beef and onion ragu) and baccalà con scarola (salt cod with Neapolitan-style chicory). Before you leave, stock up on charcuterie and cheese at the restaurant's delicatessen.

On Spaccanapoli, the street that cuts the city in two, **Cornogelato** sells excellent gelato. Or head for an aperitif at **Hotel Piazza Bellini's** pretty courtyard bar; nearby **La Fesseria Street Bar** does a great pummarola (a bloody mary made with tequila and mezcal instead of vodka). On buzzy Piazza San Domenico, **Palazzo Petrucci Pizzeria** sells small fried pizzas, including a perfect marinara with organic tomato, basil, oregano and garlic.

Clockwise from top: Pasticceria Poppella, home of the 'snowflake' pastry; Sfogliatelle Attanasio's namesake sfogliatella pastry; Pignasecca, Naples' largest food market; Sustanza's variation of oily fish (mackerel, anchovy, sardine, sardinella)

FINE DINING

Sustànza

Chef Marco Ambrosino, a Naples native, is something of a food philosopher and connoisseur of the city's culinary history, both of which inform his avant-garde dishes. One of his more notable creations is the surprisingly delicious spaghetti with fermented pasta water and miso. sustanzanapoli.com

George Restaurant

Set within the Grand Hotel Parker's, this elegant restaurant is the city's only Michelin two-star. Here, chef Domenico Candela creates edible art out of ingredients from the Campania region. His simple spaghetti al pomodoro is a feast, as are vegetable dishes such as torzella (a Neapolitan cabbage) with lentils. georgerestaurant.it

Veritas

At this Michelin-starred restaurant in Vomero, chef Carlo Spina reworks traditional cuisine, from pasta to fish, in simple yet refined ways. Try the spaghetti with fish brodetto stew, and fried amberjack with fermented black garlic. Small, innovative producers from across Campania dominate the wine list. veritasrestaurant.it

A DAY ON

THE STAIRS & SUBWAY

Naples is woven with more than 200 staircases and stairways, linking various areas of this hilly city. Fuel up for a day exploring them at **Ventimetriquadri**, which, as its name suggests, is an intimate, 20-by-four-metre space. Order one of its excellent speciality espresso or pour-over coffees, and linger here in the affluent hilltop district of Vomero where you can gaze across the city, as far as the Bay of Naples and Mount Vesuvius, then explore the medieval fortress **Castel Sant'Elmo**.

From here, it takes 20 minutes to descend — via the Pedamentina, a system of 414 steps — to Corso Vittorio Emanuele to visit its high-end boutiques and specialist shops, including bakery **Antica Forneria Molettieri**, whose puff pastry prussiane biscuits are the standout. Ride the funicular back up to Vomero to wander through the parkland surrounding **Villa Floridiana**, one of Naples' few remaining neo-classical residences. Then order pasta with lentils at nearby **Trattoria Buatta**, which also has a great wine list and a cosy setting in an authentic Neapolitan basso (a small, ground-floor apartment). Take the metro from nearby Piazza Vanvitelli directly to Toledo: one of the world's most theatrical underground stations, whose psychedelic walls and ceilings mean it resembles a giant, ethereal swimming pool. This is the jumping-off point for **Pignasecca**, the city's largest market, whose Neapolitan smells and colours unfold through narrow alleys full of locals shopping for fish, fruit and vegetables (don't miss the Amalfi Coast lemons). At **Friggitoria Fiorenzano**, sample fritto misto (fried seafood) and offal dishes such as o per e o musso, a salad of pig's feet, calf's snout and tripe seasoned with plenty of salt and lemon — one of Italy's oldest dishes.

For dinner, opt for fine dining at **Michelasso**, near the Galleria Umberto I shopping arcade. The restaurant reinterprets classics like ziti spezzati alla genovese, done here with a touch of cinnamon. Or hop in a taxi to another pizza pilgrimage spot, **Diego Vitagliano**, next to the port, where the so-called 'king of dough' perfects pizzas, including specials topped with ragu.

Salumeria
Farmaci

IMAGES: FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI; LETIZIA CIGLIUTTI; GETTY; SALVATORE ATTANASIO

STREET FOOD

Sfogliatelle Attanasio

Desserts are a big-deal street food in Naples. At Sfogliatelle Attanasio, you can find perhaps the best classic sfogliatelle (pictured) in town. These shell-shaped pastries, filled with cow's milk ricotta, are also made as a short-crust variant here, called the riccia. The recipes are said to date back to the 17th century and Attanasio has been baking them every day since 1930. sfogliatelleattanasio.it

Michele Tutino

In the Porta Nolana area, not far from its subway station you'll find the best pizza al portafoglio ('wallet pizza') in Naples. The Tutino family have been serving this smaller-than-normal pizza with lots of tomato and not so much mozzarella, folded in half, then in half again, for five generations. Eat it piping hot, starting from the crust and moving towards the tip to stop the topping leaking out. Via Cesare Carmignano, 79

I Sapori della Pescheria Azzurra

Among Naples' most famous street foods is the cuoppo: a paper cone filled with any manner of lightly fried bites. At Pescheria Azzurra in Pignasecca Market, the cuoppo contains fried seafood, including squid shrimp and sardines. As street snacks go, this is surprisingly refined — and it's a supremely affordable way to eat fresh fish. Via Portmedina 3-4

A pizza chef in action at the Concettina ai Tre Santi pizzeria
Left: Concettina ai Tre Santi's san marzano pizza

SPOTLIGHT

PIZZA

Arguably the world's best-known pizza, the margherita has been made in Naples since the first half of the 19th century. The mastunicola, which is topped with oregano, lard and basil, dates back even further, as far as 1600. Innovations made over time are more tweaks than reinventions, and pizza represents the city's culinary past, present and future. Masters of the art dedicate years to working out just how much water works best, changing flour types and cooking times to create different doughs. Current innovators, the Salvo brothers, make classic varieties at **Pizzeria Salvo** in the Chiaia district, but use two types of flour and seasonal ingredients. Six different varieties of regional tomato top its Pizza ai 6 Pomodori, while the Dream Meat has fior di latte d'Agerola cheese, baby onion, minced Angus beef, grated lemon peel, Sarawak pepper and basil.

Ciro Oliva's pizzeria, **Concettina ai Tre Santi**, uses dough made with wheats and grains selected for their more digestible qualities. And Ciro's deep dive into dough specifics has resulted in no fewer than five different types of margherita on the menu. Another meeting of science and art is found at Ciro Salvo's **50 Kalò**, whose generous use of water in the dough makes for an extremely light crust. ▫

BARS & COCKTAIL BARS

Caffè del Professore

Located in central Piazza Trieste e Trento, the caffeinated soul of the city, this is one of Naples' most popular cafes. It's easy to miss due to its diminutive size, but its menu has no fewer than 60 types of coffee and the creamy espresso is the stuff of legend.

L'Antiquario

Step through the doors of this cocktail spot (number 44 on The World's 50 Best Bars 2023 list) for red-velvet sofas, white-suited waiters and elegant drinks. The negroni carousel, with three versions of the cocktail, is great fun. instagram.com/lantiquario_napoli

Scotto Jonno

The cocktails here are inspired by local myth and history. For example, the fontane delle zizze (pisco, jasmine, pear cordial and soda) is inspired by Naples' Fountain of the Spinacorona whose siren sculpture puts out Vesuvius's fire with water from her breast. scottojonno.com

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

EasyJet, Ryanair and WizzAir fly direct to Naples from various UK airports.

WHERE TO STAY

It's Room Naples, a boutique hotel near the Duomo, has double rooms from €139 (£119) a night. itsroomnaples.com

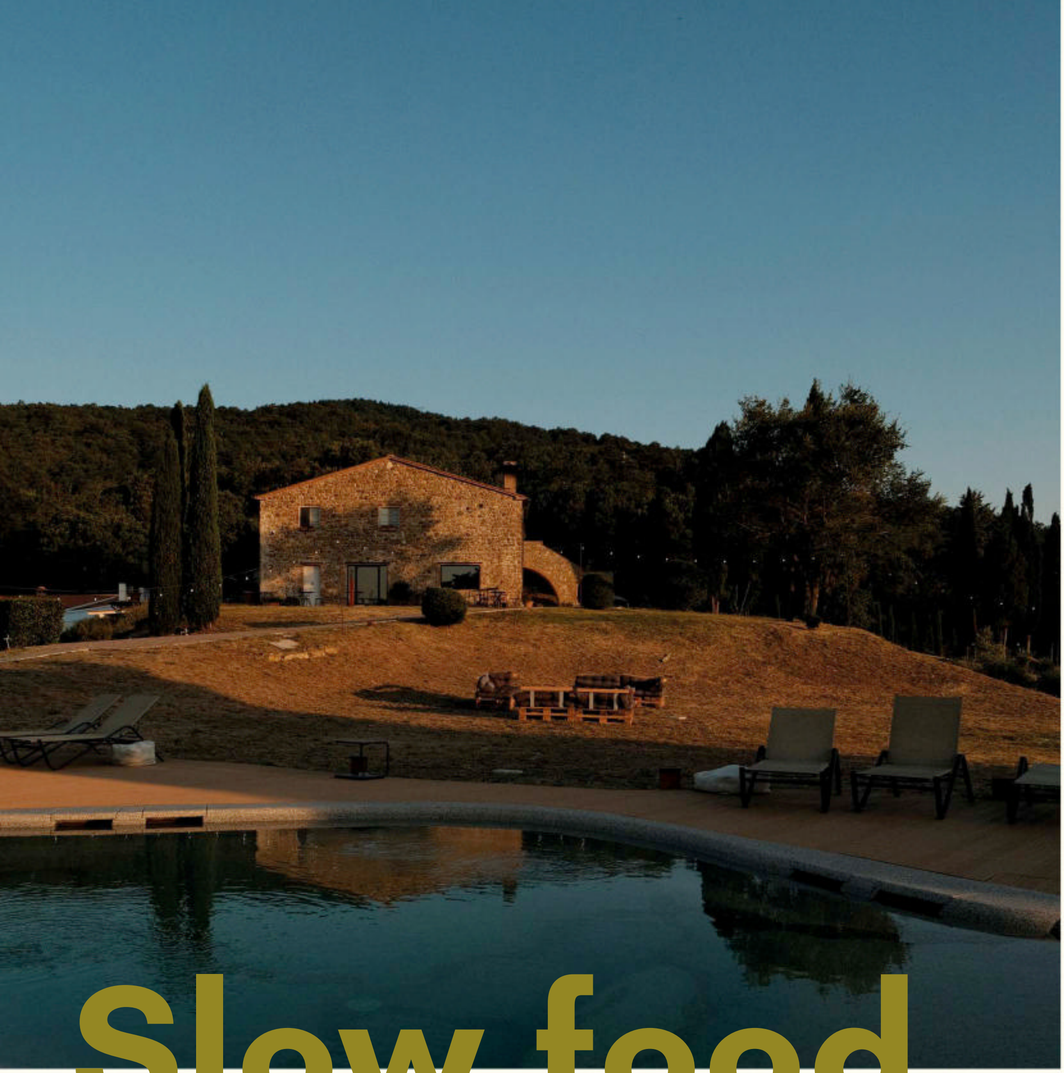
HOW TO DO IT

Jet2Holidays has a three-night B&B stay in Naples at the BW Signature Collection Hotel Paradiso, from £531 per person, based on two sharing. Includes return flights from Stansted. jet2holidays.com

MORE INFO

visitnaples.eu
italia.it

IMAGES: FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI



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A TASTE OF

SKYE

The Hebridean island's tapestry of pinnacles and lochs are the backdrop to an evolving food scene that's finding new ways to showcase its world-class bounty

WORDS: BEN OLSEN

THE LOCAL STAR

EDINBANE LODGE

Chef Calum Montgomery meets me at the Scandi-minimal Birch cafe in his native Portree, Skye's pretty main town. But we're not stopping here long, as he's keen to show off his beautiful backyard. After picking up sugar-dusted pastries for his kitchen team, we hop in his car, and as we head west the clouds part to reveal the craggy form of the Old Man of Storr in the distance. We pass coniferous forests, where red deer roam free, and the wind-whipped waters of Loch Greshornish, home to huge scallops — a consignment of which is being delivered to Calum's restaurant with rooms, Edinbane Lodge, just as we arrive.

"We're so close to the source here, we have produce landing that was in the sea or the forest five minutes before," he says, listing other menu regulars such as venison and grouse, langoustines and crab, wild berries and mushrooms. This abundance was one of the factors that drew Calum back to Skye. Having hit the ground running in Glasgow's restaurant scene, he returned to the island, and went on to become head chef at the upmarket Kinloch Lodge. "When I came back to Skye I was frustrated by some of what I saw elsewhere on the island," he says. "'Local' is probably the most overused word in the restaurant world, but I wanted more traceability — how many miles has this food travelled?"

He's addressed this with the launch of his first solo venture, Edinbane Lodge, a storied 16th-century coaching inn he opened with his wife Eilidh in stages after 2018, following a lengthy restoration. It's since picked up numerous accolades, including four AA rosettes. Cosy, tartan-accented rooms offer lodgings for overnight guests, while within a wood-panelled restaurant lined with artwork inspired by the mountains, Calum's 10-course A Taste of Skye menus offer the island's best produce, including some ingredients grown right outside.

But before I get to experience the restaurant, we first explore the undergrowth between the lodge and the loch, stopping to pick peppery scurvy grass, which garnishes his oyster beignets; the ground elder leaves used in salads; and wild sorrel, whose Granny Smith-peel flavour, Calum says, replaces the need to order in citrus from overseas. "Restricting myself to local ingredients is challenging but I've invested time into understanding what's in the Skye larder," he says, highlighting his use of sea buckthorn instead of passionfruit or swapping out vanilla pods for the almondy, honey-like qualities of the hedgerow perennial, meadowsweet.

Later, I get to experience the pleasures of Calum's imaginative cooking, with its nods to both old Hebridean recipes and New Nordic techniques. Highlights include monkfish with preserved wild garlic, barbecued mussels and celery sorbet. There's also a truly memorable seared scallop with caramelised edges and tender, sweet flesh, dressed in just a touch of seaweed butter — a simple, yet sublime, dish that's reflective of Calum's journey as a chef.

"If you'd come here a few years ago you might have found a sauce or a cracker, some herbs and a garnish," he explains. "But over the years I've been paring it back — because I know for a fact that you're never going to get a better-quality scallop than that."
edinbanelodge.com

THE WHISKY JOURNEY

TALISKER DISTILLERY

It's a thrilling time for whisky enthusiasts within the region, with two relative newcomers bringing fresh energy to a longstanding tradition. Both the Torabhaig distillery on Skye and the neighbouring Isle of Raasay distillery have set up picturesque new premises and released well-received debut whiskies in the past decade. They take their place on the newly established Hebridean Whisky Trail alongside the big draw — Skye's iconic Talisker distillery, which has been operating in Carbost since the 1830s.

On what locals might call a 'dreich' day, I pull up outside Talisker's historic home on Loch Harport. As the heavens open, distillery guide Mike Norton shrugs and says, "Well, you do need water to make whisky," before leading me to a warehouse in the recently revamped visitor centre. Armed with a pen, notebook, flavour wheel and pipette to dilute my dram, I take my seat alongside five unmarked casks as Mike explains that the spirits we're about to sample include ultra-rare single cask Taliskers, and others finished in casks of different origins and left to mature for varying periods of time. "It's fascinating to see the influence each barrel has on the same base spirit," he says as we take it in turns to dip the 'whisky thief' deep into each cask, creating a vacuum with our thumb to extract its precious contents.

"You might notice the 'sweet, heat and peat' that define Talisker," says Mike as we nose and then taste the peppery first sample, aged in American white oak, before a drop of water induces vanilla notes at the expense of the initial spice.

IMAGES: GETTY; LYNNE KENNEDY; EDINBANE LODGE

Dawn breaks over the Old Man of Storr, a rock formation on the shoulder of The Storr — a mountain north of Portree
Below from left: foraging with Calum Montgomery; barbecued oyster with brown crab and foraged sea vegetables at Edinbane Lodge

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Left: The largest town on Skye, Portree is known for the colourful houses that line its small harbourfront

For each dram we sample, we're invited to guess the back story. Colours vary from light chestnut to dark caramel depending on the influence of different casks over time — from new oak to charred wood and those that previously housed red wine, port or Caribbean rum. One particular highlight is a fantastically complex 27-year-old whisky finished in rare Pedro Ximenez-accented wood, with sherry evident through its sweet notes of dried fruit. The experience is accompanied by stories that outline the maturation decisions taken by Talisker's whisky makers. After the fifth, I leave with a glow of newfound understanding — one that equips me well for subsequent conversations on the island. malts.com raasaydistillery.com torabhaig.com

A SEAFOOD ODYSSEY
THE SEAFLOWER

Sitting aboard the *Seaflower* catamaran in Portree harbour, I watch as its skipper, Ewen Grant, deftly separates langoustine meat from its shell, twisting the claws and manoeuvring them backwards. "We've got the perfect production grounds for seafood here," he says, laying out beautifully formed langoustine 'lollipops' alongside a dollop of marie rose sauce. "You've got the cold water that shellfish thrive in and nutrients get pushed up from the depths of the Atlantic to the shallows, which attracts fish. And where you get fish you'll see thousands of birds, whales and dolphins — it's a busy little waterway."

Now in his sixth season running tours to the nearby islands of Raasay and Rona, Ewen knows these waters well. Both his brother and father are fishermen. While the main attraction on Raasay — also accessible by ferry — is its distillery, privately owned Rona, with a permanent population of just four, offers glorious isolation. Hiking trails here lead to religious sites and the settlements of those forced to subsist on the island after the Highland Clearances.

"Out on the water with my dad, I'd learn about the coastline, and for me it's important to retain these stories and heritage," Ewen says. "Seeing Skye from the sea is a highlight, too — the Old Man of Storr is stunning from this perspective, far away from the crowds."

Sadly for us, the arrival of Storm Agnes has seen even the hardiest of fishers stay home, so instead of experiencing Rona's rugged shores, we're moored in the harbour as seagulls shelter from the wind. Still, Ewen's storytelling is as impressive as his seafood spread, which, alongside beady-eyed langoustines landed by his brother this morning, includes hot and cold smoked salmon from a father-and-son duo from Mallaig, oatcakes, hunks of sourdough and salad. "People living on Rona would've lived off the sea, so this type of food was merely what was available to them," he adds over a crisp glass of sauvignon blanc. "These langoustines used to be seen as a poor man's food yet now there are few things more luxurious. Although I think they'd have probably called them 'prawns'." seaflowerskye.com

Baked oysters with brown crab and pepper dulse butter

Calum Montgomery's recipe brings together the best ingredients from the waters around Skye.

SERVES: 2

TAKES: 1 HR 30 MINS

INGREDIENTS

- 200g Orkney butter
- ¼ lemon, juiced
- 5g dried pepper dulse
- 8 Pacific oysters
- 200g crab claw meat
- 50g panko breadcrumbs, toasted
- 2 tbsp parsley, finely sliced

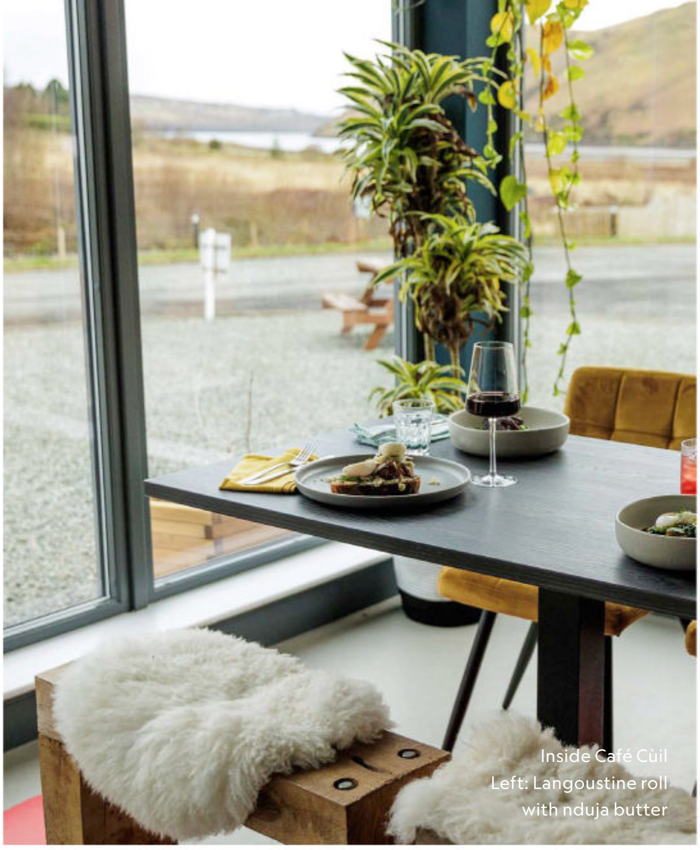
METHOD

① Heat oven to 250C, 230C fan, gas 9. Put the butter in a pan over a high heat until it turns nutty brown in colour. Remove from the heat and add the lemon juice, then leave to infuse with pepper dulse seaweed for 1 hr. Pulse with a hand blender or scoop the seaweed out of the pan and chop finely by hand before returning to the pan.

② Open the oysters and discard the liquid, then dry them on kitchen paper. Place the oysters back in their shells and arrange on a baking tray. Top each one with 25g of the crabmeat, then spoon over the infused butter. Put in the oven for 3 mins.

③ Remove from the oven. Top with the breadcrumbs and sprinkle over the chopped parsley, then serve.

IMAGES: GETTY; LYNNE KENNEDY



Inside Café Cùil
Left: Langoustine roll with nduja butter

THE CONTEMPORARY CAFE

CAFÉ CÙIL

Despite its remote spot at the foot of the Cuillins, it's hard to miss Café Cùil. This scarlet-red hut overlooking Loch Harport — well placed for those returning from Skye's Fairy Pools — has hit a sweet spot since launching in 2022, appealing to both locals and visitors who, like me, follow the single-track road towards Carbost for chef Clare Coghill's seasonal cooking.

The Skye native ran a popular Scottish cafe in the northeast London neighbourhood of Dalston before returning home after lockdown eager to make her own mark on the island. "I feel Skye has been on the map in terms of fine dining for quite a few years now," she says, across a counter laden with cranachan (a dessert made with oats, cream and whisky) and bramble tarts. "But what I picked up from London was the idea of casual, accessible dining — that you don't have to pay through the nose or dress to the nines to eat great food."

This approach shaped Café Cùil's relaxed yet refined menu of brunch staples and crowd-pleasers, with an ale-marinated beef brisket rarebit, tattie scone stack with Skye black pudding and square sausage, and hand-dived scallop benedict among them. The cafe is open from March to November, and I've come during mushroom season. I opt for chanterelles on toast, which arrive drizzled in vivid hazelnut pesto. "I love the fact that I can go for a walk and find world-class ingredients," Clare says of her self-taught foraging skills. "People on Skye have a deep connection to the land, and whether it's through crofting or raising animals, there's an innate knowledge among older generations that's being passed down."

A further strand between past and present that Clare is keen to preserve is Gaelic, the language spoken by about a third of islanders, in which the cafe's name, Cùil, means 'nest' or 'nook'. "Gaelic is integral to the identity of many people here, yet there is a fear that we might lose it as a language," she says. "It was important for me to promote the language, be that through bilingual menus or signs around the cafe encouraging people to speak together in Gaelic — as this, I think, is something to celebrate." cafecuil.com

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE
There's no airport or train station on Skye, but it's linked to mainland Scotland by the Skye Bridge. You can reach it by taking the train to Fort William or Kyle of Lochalsh, or a flight to Inverness Airport, and catching buses from there. However, the best way to experience the island is by car.

WHERE TO STAY
Base yourself at the Bracken Hide on the outskirts of the island's capital, Portree. Its comfortable eco-glamping pods, sauna, restaurant and whisky bar extend up into the hills with views over the harbour. From £149. brackenhide.co.uk

MORE INFO
visitscotland.com

RHUBARB & SEA SALT SOUR

LOCAL FAVOURITES

Craft beer

Over the past five years, Cuillin Brewery has introduced charismatic contemporary styles alongside pub mainstays, including the easy-drinking Cuillin Session IPA. It also champions local businesses through special editions like the Seaweed IPA, in which sugar kelp adds a dash of salinity. cuillinbrewery.com

Tablet

This crumbly confectionery is like fudge, yet with a brittleness from its use of condensed milk rather than cream. Pick up some at Donnie's Tablet Shed on the Waternish peninsula, where a purple honesty box proffers homemade tablet, including stem ginger and Talisker whisky variants.

IMAGES: CAFÉ CÙIL

M

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ON LOCATION

MONMOUTH

Organic beef, microbrewery beer and bara brith: this Welsh market town makes the most of the Wye Valley's plentiful produce

WORDS: CONNOR MCGOVERN. ILLUSTRATION: TANYA COOPER

Home to the only surviving fortified river bridge in Britain and the birthplace of warrior-king Henry V, Monmouth is steeped in medieval history. But in recent years, the Welsh market town and surrounding area have quietly become a destination for gourmands as well as history buffs. Squeezed between the wooded hills of the Wye Valley, just a few miles from the English border, Monmouth bustles with well-stocked delis, bakeries and farmers' markets (held on Fridays and Saturdays), all showcasing the very best of local produce, from beef to beer. Add a Michelin-starred restaurant and cosy country inns, and travellers have a winning recipe for a gourmet getaway.

Monnow Street is the main thoroughfare; on a gently sloping hill, it's home to independent food businesses, backed by the distant peaks of the Wye Valley's designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A highlight is **The Marches Delicatessen** (marchesdeli.co.uk), a one-stop shop for Welsh and Wye Valley produce. Browse chutneys from The Preservation Society, organic Hafod cheddar, whisky from Dà Mhìle Distillery and sheep's whey vodka from Ewenique Spirits. Be sure to linger a while with a coffee and slice of bara brith fruit loaf in the cafe at the back of the shop — it has a pretty courtyard garden, too.

Just up the street is the award-winning **Alex Gooch** bakery and cafe (alexgoochbaker.com), where customers come for everything from mixed-grain sourdoughs and challah buns to fruit loaves and ciabattas. Everything here is plant-based, too, including the flavoured croissants and Danish pastries — try one of the croncs (sweet, cinnamon-rich balls of laminated pastry) before they sell out.

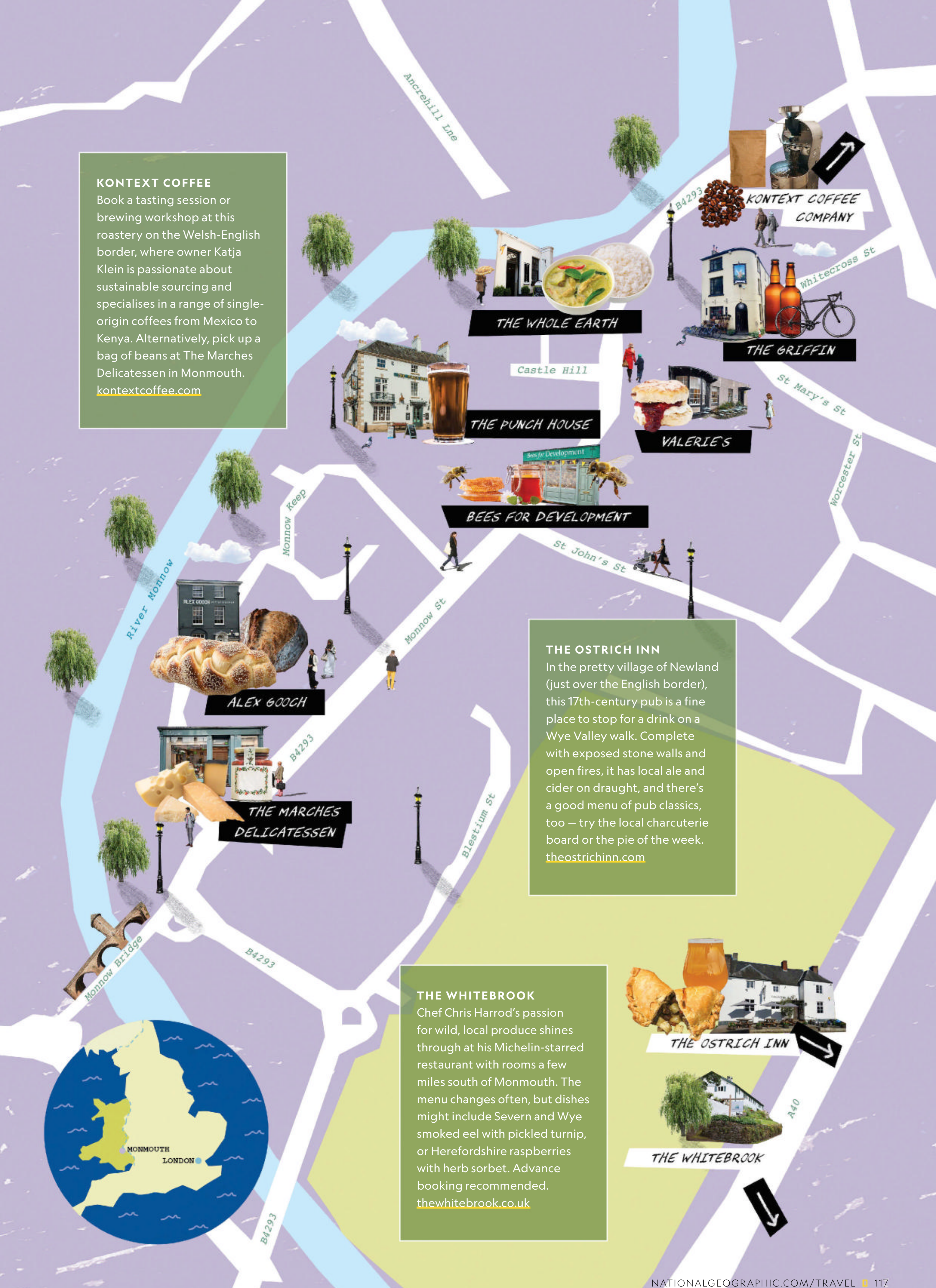
If scones are on the agenda, **Valerie's** (facebook.com/valeriesmonmouth) — self-titled 'scone specialists' — is the place to go. Many people come (with dogs in tow) to this laid-back cafe for a classic cream tea, but look out for special varieties of scone, too, which might include chilli and cheese or pretzel and chocolate chip, best slathered with Nutella and clotted cream.

For something even sweeter, head to **Bees for Development** (shop.beesfordevelopment.org). In 2020, Monmouth became the UK's first 'Bee Town' thanks to its efforts to protect the pollinators, and that commitment is proudly on show here — shoppers can pick up beeswax candles, soaps and gifts, along with jars of Welsh honey from Afon Mêl, plus mead from the Wye Valley Meadery. Proceeds from the shop help support beekeepers around the world.

Bunting-clad Church Street is a charming place for a wander, home to bookshops, cafes and The Savoy, believed to be Wales's oldest working theatre. Tucked away off the street in a quiet courtyard is **The Whole Earth Thai Bistro** (facebook.com/thewholeeariththai), a popular daytime spot for coffee and cake, with a much-loved menu of Thai staples served in the evening, from coconut-rich green curry to fiery tom yum soup.

Round off the evening with a drink at **The Griffin** (honeysucklewood.co.uk), a former inn that's been reinvented as a bike-repair shop and brilliant little micropub, stocked with bottles from breweries across Monmouthshire and neighbouring Herefordshire. Alternatively, sip a pint of smooth Wye Valley Butty Bach ale on the terrace of **The Punch House** (thepunchhousemonmouth.co.uk), a classic but contemporary pub with rooms beside Monmouth's grand, 18th-century Shire Hall.

HOW TO DO IT: Creates is a cafe, bistro and boutique B&B in the heart of town, with doubles from £75. The nearest stations are Chepstow or Lydney on the Cardiff-Cheltenham line, each around 30 minutes away by taxi. From Paddington, take a train to Newport, where you can make the hour's transfer to Monmouth on the number 60 bus. createsmountmouth.com visitmonmouthshire.com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KONTEXT COFFEE
Book a tasting session or brewing workshop at this roastery on the Welsh-English border, where owner Katja Klein is passionate about sustainable sourcing and specialises in a range of single-origin coffees from Mexico to Kenya. Alternatively, pick up a bag of beans at The Marches Delicatessen in Monmouth. kontextcoffee.com

THE OSTRICH INN
In the pretty village of Newland (just over the English border), this 17th-century pub is a fine place to stop for a drink on a Wye Valley walk. Complete with exposed stone walls and open fires, it has local ale and cider on draught, and there's a good menu of pub classics, too — try the local charcuterie board or the pie of the week. theostrichinn.com

THE WHITEBROOK
Chef Chris Harrod's passion for wild, local produce shines through at his Michelin-starred restaurant with rooms a few miles south of Monmouth. The menu changes often, but dishes might include Severn and Wye smoked eel with pickled turnip, or Herefordshire raspberries with herb sorbet. Advance booking recommended. thewhitebrook.co.uk

GEORGIA

A gastronomic guide

Georgia is fast earning its stripes for hiking and off-piste skiing in the Greater Caucasus mountains, but it's the country's vineyards and kitchens that are really stealing the show. Words: Emily Lush

Vibrant and varied, Georgia's cuisine reflects its location at the intersection of Europe and Asia on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. The country has a dozen climatic zones, ranging from subtropical to high alpine and semi-desert, which provide a bounty of produce, including 500 indigenous grape varieties. Food is lovingly made using centuries-old cooking techniques, including fragrant stews, bright salads and earthy soups, as well as a wealth of regional dishes. A sense of generosity underpins every meal — whether it's at a family-run vineyard where free-pouring and zealous toasting are the norm, or at a restaurant where the table often ends up three-plates deep. Sample the flavours of the country with these wining-and-dining experiences.

FROM GRAPE TO GLASS

Located in Manavi, near Georgia's capital city Tbilisi, family-owned Giuaani is an independent winery that traces its origins back to 1894, when its first qvevri (clay winemaking vessels) were placed in the ground. Head winemaker Giorgi Jmukhadze uses them in tandem with oak barrels and steel tanks, so you can compare traditional Georgian and more familiar European-style wines. Wine flights feature khikhvi, a classic dry amber wine (also known as orange wine), and an upbeat rosé that blends cabernet sauvignon and tavkveri grapes.

For a more immersive wine experience, take a tour of the Kvareli Wine Cave in the Kakheti region of eastern Georgia. Operated by Khareba, one of the country's largest commercial wineries, it's made up of a four-and-a-half-mile-long network of tunnels, hewn from the foothills of the Greater Caucasus on the eastern side of the Alazani Valley. The complex was originally constructed for military purposes during the Cold War, but now the stable 12-16C temperatures provide ideal conditions for ageing and storing wine. A guided tour of the space and its 25,000-strong collection of bottles culminates with a tasting.

In the small city of Ambrolauri, around 150 miles north west of Tbilisi in the mountainous Racha region, a giant wine bottle statue towering over the main intersection is your first hint of the drink's importance to this part of the country. Its label reads 'Khvanchkara', the region's syrupy-sweet, darkly-coloured red wine made from aleksandrouli and mujuretuli grapes. Stalin confiscated the wine from its original creators, the noble Kipiani family, in order to manufacture it en masse. Today, winery Royal Khvanchkara has recovered a Stalin-era factory to take the Kipiani's winemaking legacy back to its roots. Headed by 11th-generation vintner Lado Uzunashvili, it offers grape-to-glass tours and tastings.

FROM FIELD TO FORK

Located in the courtyard of the Writers' House in old Tbilisi, a turn-of-the-century mansion built for brandy baron and philanthropist David Sarajishvili, chef Tekuna Gachechiladze's Cafe Littera is perfect for al fresco dining. Gachechiladze is known as a renegade of Georgian cuisine thanks to her open-minded approach to traditional recipes. Local produce is front and centre on the menu, which marries classic Georgian flavours with European techniques in dishes such as chilled

IMAGES: GEORGIAN NATIONAL TOURISM ADMINISTRATION; SHUTTERSTOCK

sorrel and mint soup, fig carpaccio with Tushetian guda cheese and veal tartare with local truffles. Sit on the tiled terrace or plant yourself under a tree in the sculpture garden between the stone busts.

Meanwhile, keeping with the literary theme, the west Georgian city of Kutaisi was recently named as a UNESCO Creative City of Literature and was once the stomping ground for some of the country's most influential composers, playwrights and poets. There, you'll find the restaurant Doli, which evokes the intimacy of a 20th-century writers' salon. Order the gobi, a large wooden bowl piled high with a selection of different dishes including vibrant pkhali — a vegan-friendly dish, sometimes called 'Georgian pâté', made by combining beetroot leaves, spinach, wild cabbage and other vegetables with finely ground walnuts and spices. Then peek into the kitchen to see chef Giorgi Andghuladze cook mchadi (Georgian cornbread) the old-school way in stacked clay pans called ketsi.

Further west, the historic Samegrelo region stands out for its flavoursome cuisine. In the region's capital Zugdidi, Diaroni (meaning 'a place for a feast' in the Megrelian language) restaurant rings out with live folk music most nights of the week. In the past, fiery pepper blend ajika was used in Georgia to ward off diseases. Nowadays, at Diaroni, ajika lends its heat to kharcho, a stew of beef or chicken with a velvety walnut sauce. The restaurant's showpiece is elarji — cornmeal blended with stringy cheese, which the servers take great pleasure in twirling and pulling over their heads before heaping onto your plate.

On the Black Sea Coast in the city of Batumi, Oval restaurant gives the catch of the day the fine-dining treatment, serving fresh seafood with both Georgian and Asian flavours. Try the likes of tasty tom yam shrimp or fresh mussels in a tarragon-heavy broth called chakapuli. Oval's chef Guram Bagdhoshvili also offers a special snail dish and a decadent version of adjaruli khachapuri — Georgia's iconic boat-shaped cheese pie with a glistening egg yolk at its centre — featuring tenili, a rare cheese made by pulling softened curds. Both dishes are specialties of the Meskheti region, where Bagdhoshvili traces his ancestry to.

From left: The picturesque town of Sighnaghi in Georgia's Kakheti region; winemaking in Georgia dates back more than 8,000 years and remains an important part of the country's culture; locally produced ingredients are used to create fresh and vibrant dishes such as pkhali

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Fly from London to Tbilisi with one connection (direct flights are due to be launched in the future). From Tbilisi, rent a car and follow the Kakheti Wine Route east to the Kakheti region, or reach the coastal town of Batumi in the west in around five hours. Use the rail network to explore other towns in the west. For more information, visit *georgia.travel*

emotions are Georgia

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BOOKS

SEASONS & SPICES

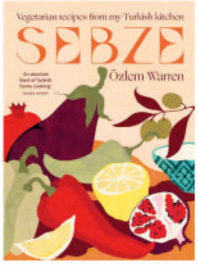
FEATURING AN ARRAY OF FRUIT, VEG AND NUTS, TURKISH CUISINE ISN'T JUST FOR MEAT-LOVERS. IN HER NEW BOOK, ÖZLEM WARREN CELEBRATES THE VEGETARIAN DISHES OF HER HOMELAND

What are your earliest food memories?
I grew up in Antakya in southeast Turkey and spent childhood holidays there at my grandparents' 450-year-old stone house. They grew walnuts, figs and pomegranates that my grandmother would use to make molasses. I absorbed everything watching her and my mother cook. My uncle and grandfather were food merchants and would bring cases of fresh produce home, which were used in meals or preserved — nothing was wasted. And I loved going to the bakery and the farmers' market with my father, handpicking produce and chatting to the vendors.

Are markets still a big part of life today?
Very much so, you'll find one at the heart of every neighbourhood. Each is different, depending on its location, the local demographic and growing conditions. They have regional ingredients straight from the producers and often a huge variety of olives, pickles and cheese. The bakery is a central part of our culinary tradition — fresh pide flatbreads or somun loaves are bought daily. Bakeries are also hubs where locals gather, and many act as community ovens where people can take their bread to be baked instead of doing it at home.

What are the key ingredients in Turkish cooking?
The Ottoman Empire made a big contribution to the way we eat. The sultan controlled the spice routes, bringing the best spices and produce to the kitchens at Topkapi Palace. Cumin and sumac are key flavours, but pul biber [aleppo pepper] is probably the most-used spice. We don't just use it in cooking but also as a seasoning — you'll find a pot on every Turkish table. We're also a country of yoghurt-lovers. It's in almost everything — dips, meze and desserts. And we produce the best nuts; I now live in the UK and whenever I visit home, I take an empty suitcase, which I fill with nuts to bring back with me — almonds from the Datça region, pistachios from Gaziantep and hazelnuts from the Black Sea.

Is there a difference in food across the regions?
It's a vast land — the climate and soil differ greatly, as do the various ethnic communities that live across Turkey. If you go to the Black Sea region, you can feel the strong influence of the Ottoman Empire and there's a focus on ingredients such as tea, corn and cornmeal, anchovies and butter. Southern Turkey has more spicy food, pomegranate molasses and bulgur, as well as the tradition of drying excess produce such as aubergines and peppers to preserve them or turn them into pastes. Mainland Anatolia is known as the home of wheat and hearty food, traditionally made to sustain people through the long winters, while southeast Anatolia is the home of baklava. Towards the Aegean, the influence of the Med and the climate brings lots of citrus, herbs and fish, lighter flavours and vegetables cooked in olive oil.



Sebze: Vegetarian Recipes from My Turkish Table, by Özlem Warren (£28, Hardie Grant)

You lived in Istanbul for many years — what's the food scene like there?
The city is welcoming and diverse, and its food is greatly influenced by its immigrant communities. There are amazing markets with different regional specialities. Misir Carsisi spice market in the Old City is a special place to visit; it's a feast for the senses and has huge displays of spices, dried fruit and nuts. The city also has brilliant street food — one of my favourite things to do is to go to Ortaköy Square and grab a baked potato with delicious toppings from a vendor. Then I eat it with a glass of çay [Turkish tea] looking out over the Bosphorus strait. Or you can pick up a gözleme [filled flatbread] or simit [sesame-encrusted bread ring] to enjoy on a ferry trip across the water.

What might surprise people about Turkish cuisine?
Most people think of kebabs when they think of Turkish food, and we do love them, but that isn't what we eat at home. With my new cookbook I wanted to showcase the variety of vegetarian dishes eaten in the country. We love pulses, legumes and wholegrains, as well as vegetables, and make lots of casseroles, filled breads and pastries, vegetable meze and pickles. It's very seasonal, naturally wholesome and frugal. There's also a sharing element to Turkish food and a sense of community that I wanted to get across in the book. That spirit of hospitality underlines everything we do, it's in my DNA.
Interview: Caroline Morrish

IMAGES: SAM A HARRIS; GETTY

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Turkish Delight

Spices for sale in Istanbul
Clockwise from above: Breads, including simit and lahmacun; Galata Tower in Istanbul; cabbage rolls filled with bulgur, onions and pomegranate molasses

Chard cooked in olive oil with onion, peppers and rice

This is an easy way to enjoy chard, which in Turkey grows mostly in the northwest, Black Sea, Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean regions. Its gently tart flavour is delicious here, but you can use spinach or large, leafy collard greens instead. When the weather is warm, we typically eat this dish cold or at room temperature; on cold days, we enjoy it hot with a dollop of yoghurt and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil on top.

SERVES 4 **TAKES: 40 MINS**

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp olive oil
1 medium red or yellow onion, finely chopped
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped (use more if you like it spicy)
4 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped
1 tbsp double-concentrated tomato paste
230g tin chopped tomatoes
450g chard, cleaned, halved lengthways and roughly chopped into 1cm pieces
85g long-grain rice, rinsed
crusty bread, to serve (optional)

METHOD

① Heat the olive oil in a large, wide saucepan over a medium-high heat, add the onion and sauté for 3-4 mins until starting to soften. Add the chilli, garlic, tomato paste and chopped tomatoes to the pan, combine well and cook for 2 mins. Stir in the chopped chard and gently combine and wilt over a medium heat for 2-3 mins.

② Add the rice and combine well. Measure 460ml hot water. Rinse the chopped tomato tin with some of the hot water, then pour this liquid and the remaining hot water into the pan. Season with salt and pepper and stir well, then cover and cook for 20-25 mins over a low-medium heat until the rice and vegetables are cooked. Turn off the heat and leave to rest for 10 mins, covered. Serve with crusty bread to mop up the juices, if you like.

Börek with potatoes, onions and sparkling water

Traditionally this börek pastry uses beyaz peynir, our creamy version of feta, and it's a lovely match for the caramelised onions and cumin-spiced mash. You can use any cheese you have, though. The sparkling water in the glaze brings a springy touch; it puffs up the börek slightly and adds crispness.

SERVES: 12

TAKES: 1 HR 10 MINS PLUS COOLING

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp olive oil, for greasing
2 x 270g packs of filo sheets (48x25 cm)
1 medium egg, beaten
1 tbsp golden sesame seeds
1 tbsp black sesame seeds

FOR THE FILLING

700g small-medium potatoes, smaller ones halved and larger ones chopped into three
3 tbsp olive oil
2 medium onions, finely chopped
1 tsp ground cumin
½ tsp pul biber
1 small bunch of parsley (about 25g), finely chopped
200g beyaz peynir or feta, drained and crumbled

FOR BRUSHING

1 medium egg, beaten
110 ml whole milk
2 tbsp olive oil
90ml sparkling water

METHOD

1 To make the filling, put the potatoes in a medium pan of hot, salted water, partially cover and set over a medium heat for around 20 mins until cooked through. Drain in a colander and leave to cool.

2 Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a wide pan, add the onions and sauté over a medium-high heat for 12-14 mins, stirring often, until caramelised. Season with salt, pepper and the pul biber, then leave to cool.

3 Peel the potatoes and discard the skins. Put the potatoes in a large mixing bowl and season with salt and the ground cumin, then mash with a potato masher or a large fork.

4 Combine the cooled onions with the mashed potato in the mixing bowl, then stir in the parsley and beyaz peynir. Use your hands to give everything a good mix.

5 Combine all the ingredients for brushing in a small bowl.

6 Heat oven to 200C, 180C fan, gas 6. Grease the base and sides of a 20x30x5cm baking dish with olive oil. Open the filo sheets, place on a clean, dry surface and cover with a damp towel. Cut the filo sheets to 20x30cm to fit into the baking dish — as well as these larger, 20x30cm sheets, you'll also be left with the smaller offcut sheets. Place two of the larger sheets in the greased dish and brush with 2 tbsp of the milk mixture. Top with two of the smaller sheets, laying them side by side to make one large sheet. Repeat, brushing with the milk mixture every two layers until you reach the 11th sheet. Brush with the milk mixture again and evenly spread over the filling. Carry on layering and brushing with the milk mixture every two sheets. Place the last sheet on top, pour in the remaining milk mixture and brush, tucking in the edges of the pastry.

7 Slice into 12 pieces and let the milk mixture penetrate the slices. Brush with beaten egg and sprinkle with both types of sesame seed. Let the börek soak up the liquid for 10 mins, then bake for 30-35 mins until golden. Leave to cool for 10 mins, then serve warm. You can bake a day ahead and keep covered in the fridge. You can also freeze cooked slices in a single layer in a sealed freezer bag. Reheat in a 200C, 180C fan, gas 6 oven for 8-10 mins.

IMAGES: SAM A HARRIS

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Baked vegetables with chickpeas

Türlü is a stew traditionally cooked on the stove, but I love the additional layer of flavours baking brings. The earthy chickpeas go well with the vegetables in this versatile, generous dish, and in winter, you could add beetroot, potatoes, squash or leeks.

SERVES: 6-8 **TAKES: 1 HR 30 MINS**

INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium aubergines, trimmed, halved lengthways and sliced into 1cm chunks
- 3 medium courgettes, trimmed, halved lengthways and sliced into 1cm chunks
- 2 medium carrots, trimmed, halved lengthways and sliced into 1cm chunks
- 2 medium red onions, roughly chopped
- 1 green pepper, deseeded and roughly chopped
- 1 red pepper, deseeded and roughly chopped
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp pul biber or red pepper flakes
- 6 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed (discard any loose skins)
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tbsp double-concentrated tomato paste
- crusty bread or plain rice, to serve (optional)

METHOD

1 Heat oven to 220C, 200C fan, gas 7. Spread the aubergine pieces on a wide tray, sprinkle with salt and set aside for around 10 minutes. Gently squeeze the excess moisture out of the aubergines using kitchen paper.

2 Tip the aubergines, courgettes, carrots, red onions and red and green peppers into a large, lipped baking sheet and toss with the olive oil, oregano, pul biber and some salt and pepper. Use your hands to ensure all the vegetables are well coated.

3 Bake for around 40 mins, turning the vegetables halfway through, until charred at the edges and softened.

4 Remove from the oven and transfer the vegetables to a large, deep baking dish, about 27x15 cm.

5 Stir in the garlic, tomatoes, chickpeas and cumin, season with salt and pepper and combine well. Pour 300ml hot water into the empty tomato tin, add the tomato paste and mix well. Pour this into the baking dish and gently combine. Check the seasoning and add more salt and pepper to taste.

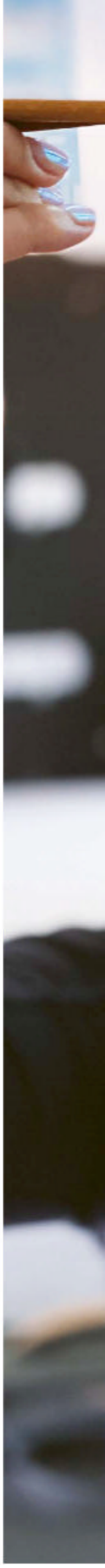
6 Bake for 30–35 mins until all vegetables are cooked through and browned at the edges, and the sauce has thickened. Serve immediately.

IMAGE: SAM A HARRIS

NEW RELEASES

MORNING MEALS

EXPLORING INDULGENT BREAKFASTS ACROSS CHINA



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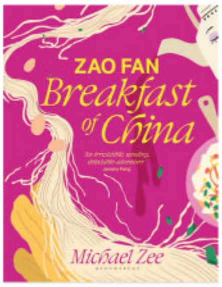


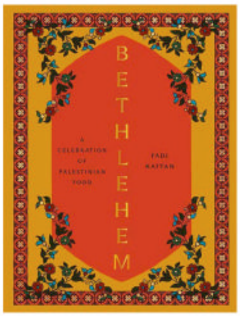
ZAO FAN: BREAKFAST OF CHINA

Michael Zee

Part travel diary, part cookbook, this deep dive into provincial Chinese breakfast foods unwraps an array of underrepresented recipes, techniques and flavours. Zee — who's British-Chinese and currently based in Bologna — made a name for himself via his cult Instagram account, Symmetry Breakfast, in which he used to document the identical breakfasts he made for himself and his husband. This longstanding fascination with the first meal of the day led him on a quest to discover all that China had to offer when he moved to Shanghai in 2017.

Zao Fan sees Zee work his way across regions such as Sichuan and Guangdong, where Cantonese cuisine favours a balance of sweetness, salt and spice. The gastronomic history and tales of the people behind the food add depth to Zee's storytelling, while QR codes link directly to videos of the dishes being made. Try whipping up a traditional congee, or fluffy steamed buns with fillings from pumpkin to pork. You'll also find various breads, noodles and more adventurous options, such as donkey meat sandwiches and tripe satay. *£26, Bloomsbury*

BEST OF THE REST

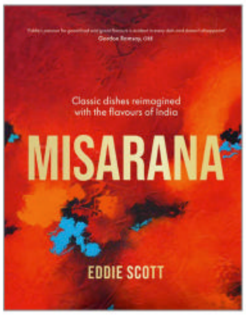


STORIES

Bethlehem

Fadi Kattan

Franco-Palestinian chef Kattan tells tales of his childhood in Bethlehem and his homeland's cuisine by celebrating unsung cooks and culinary heroes. He also shares classic recipes ranging from spiced slow-roast lamb to kofte and stuffed vine leaves, plus his own innovations. *£28, Hardie Grant*



FUSION FOOD

Misarana

Eddie Scott

In *Misarana* (meaning 'fusion' in Punjabi), 2022 *MasterChef* champion Scott recalls food enjoyed on childhood holidays in France, alongside Punjabi recipes from his grandparents. These — and other — international influences collide in dishes like Taj Palace French toast and gratin aloo boulangère. *£26, Carnival*

Congyou banmian

In this dish, spring onions are infused slowly in oil to create a pungent dressing that, for me, is an unmistakeable flavour of Shanghai. You can keep leftover oil in an airtight container in the fridge and, as long as the onions are submerged, it should last for up to a month

SERVES: 2 **TAKES: 1 HR 40 MINS PLUS COOLING**

INGREDIENTS

600g spring onions, cut into 5cm batons
600ml neutral oil
3 tbsp small dried shrimp (optional)
2 tbsp dark soy sauce
3 tbsp light soy sauce
2 tsp granulated sugar
100g dried wheat noodles

METHOD

① Heat oven to 180C, 160C fan, gas 4. Spread out the spring onions in an even layer in a roasting tin, then pour over the oil, making sure they're covered. Cover the tin with foil and roast in the oven for 90 mins; halfway through the cooking time, turn the spring onions and add the dried shrimp, if using. Remove from the oven when the spring onions have shrivelled, then leave to cool.

② Pour the oil and spring onions (and shrimp, if using) into a jar or airtight container, making sure the onions are completely submerged in the oil.

③ To make the dressing, heat 6-8 tbsp of the spring onion oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat (don't add the spring onions or shrimp yet), then add both the soy sauces and the sugar. Bring to the boil and cook until the sauce is glossy and the sugar has dissolved. Add 2-3 tbsp of the confit spring onions and shrimp, then taste and adjust the levels of sweetness or saltiness accordingly.

④ Bring a large pan of water to the boil and cook the noodles according to packet instructions. Divide the noodles between two bowls and spoon the dressing over them. Garnish with extra confit onion and shrimp, then stir vigorously and serve.

WORDS: ROSIE CONROY.
IMAGES: MICHAEL ZEE

Simple Korean Food from the Streets of Seoul
POCHA
SU SCOTT

STREET-FOOD STAPLES

Pocha

Su Scott

Korean-born Scott's new cookbook is anchored in her affection for Seoul's pochas (traditional food stalls). The comforting recipes are inspired by street food such as Korean corn dogs and fried chicken, while kimchi risotto and bulgogi rice balls provide a playful take on classic flavours. *£27, Hardie Grant*

CAROLYN BOYD
AMUSE BOUCHE
How to Eat Your Way Around France

FRENCH FLAVOURS

Amuse Bouche

Carolyn Boyd

Food writer Boyd's latest release is an essential guide to France's gastronomic specialities, from the well known to well-kept secrets. She gives the lowdown on what to eat and where, plus a smattering of recipes including buckwheat tarte aux pommes (apple tarte) from Brittany and cervelle de canut — a Lyonnaise cheese dip. *£18.99, Profile*

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DINE OUT

THE BLUE PELICAN

DEAL, KENT • THEBLUEPELICAN.CO.UK

CHEF LUKE GREEN SHOWS IMPRESSIVE SKILLS IN A PERFECTLY BALANCED MENU OF JAPANESE-INSPIRED, BRITISH SEASIDE DISHES

Fusion restaurants are tricky. Successfully combining the culinary DNA of two cultures is no mean feat. Hats off to the likes of Jean-Georges Vongerichten, with his Michelin-ranked combination of French and Asian flavours, and Kiwi chef Peter Gordon, who's been described as the 'godfather' of fusion cooking. But the Vongerichtens and Gordons of this world are rare.

So, it's with anticipation that I make my way to The Blue Pelican in Deal, where the big idea from chef Luke Green seems to be East meets West and lives happily ever after. The restaurant is owned by ex-*Wallpaper* magazine design editor Alex Bagner and her husband, Chris Hicks, the couple behind the chic and much-loved hotel The Rose, just a few streets away in the coastal Kent town.

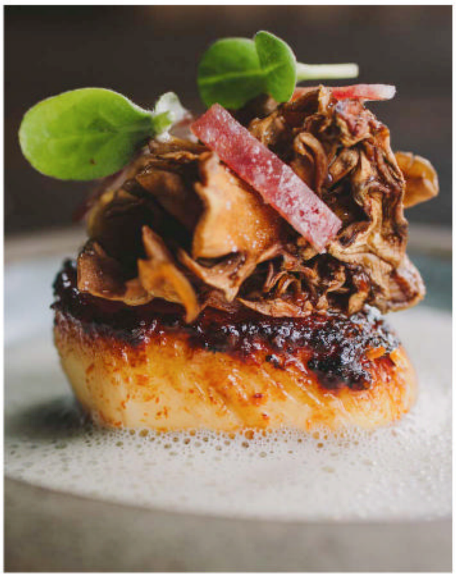
You notice Bagner's hand in the Pelican's decor — it hums with good taste. The red-and-white chequerboard floor is crowned with blue wooden banquettes, while stylised paintings of the sea — by local artist Tom Maryniak — grace the walls. Large picture windows provide enviable views out onto the shore, and the cheery clientele — largely locals rather than Deal day-trippers — are all smiles as they sip Japanese whisky cocktails.

The meal is one knock-out dish after another. First up is a broth of mushroom and hojicha (roasted green tea), a favourite of the new-wave Tokyo izakayas that inspired Luke Green's dish of deep umami smokiness. Puntarelle, a leafier variant of chicory, comes as a tempura with bottarga and a boiled egg-based gribiche sauce, and shows Green's real skill in bringing together the techniques and flavours of Japan, Italy and France. The tempura is the best I've ever had and the accompaniments are perfectly pitched, while the chicken tsukune — a sort of skewered meatball — with fresh peas, lardo and smoked broth has more flair than an Abba concert.

From the grill section comes dry-aged rump cap — the bit that crowns the rump cut — which is served with Tokyo turnips, a pearlescent mini variety of the vegetable that gives our type a bad name. I share a maitake mushroom rice, baked in an earthenware donabe dish, with my friend. We both coo at it as if it were a newborn, so light and delicate are the grains.

The short drinks list has some nice natural white and red wines, with a focus on English varieties. The dessert menu, meanwhile, stands out with one choice: kumquat and kinako (soybean flour) set custard. Its only flaw is that there isn't enough of it.

The Blue Pelican is a restaurant that's all about glorious precision — and the fusion of flavours is just right. *Selection of nine dishes for two people around £100; wine from £32 a bottle. Samuel Muston*

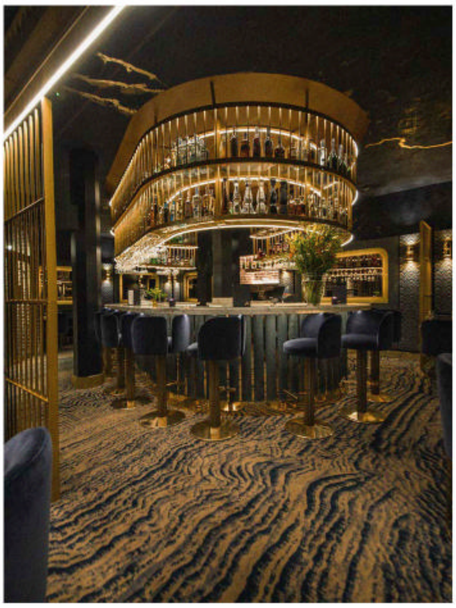


SMOKE

SOLIHULL, WEST MIDLANDS • HAMPTONMANOR.COM/SMOKE

Smoke. The name not only describes the cooking of *MasterChef: The Professionals* 2019 winner Stu Deeley and his team, but also the atmosphere of the low-lit restaurant within the walled gardens of Hampton Manor. It's also home to Michelin-starred Grace & Savour and a bakery, so the relaunch of Smoke provides new reasons to visit the country house hotel.

The focus on comfort food cooked over flames remains, but a new counter dining option allows diners to watch chefs adding flourishes to robust, hearty food. There's a la carte dining and a more decadent 'Blind Five' tasting menu, with that same versatility offering perfectly baked bread, light starters and a signature crab ravioli coated in a rich, XO-laced umami sauce. Main courses, classic and simple, are elevated with pops of seasonal colour and flavour. There's a high-end feel but Smoke hasn't lost its straightforwardness, most visible in its boulangère potatoes, picture-perfect and beautifully gluttonous. Desserts have similar balance: a chocolate and dulce de leche delight; a refined baked Alaska reminiscent of rhubarb and custard sweets. Smoke was good before, and this second iteration certainly fuels its fire. *Four courses from £85 per person (£65 on Sundays); wine from £42 a bottle. Ellen Manning*



MAYA

MANCHESTER • MAYAMANCHESTER.COM

From the start, Maya feels attuned to its Canal Street location of redbrick warehouses steeped in Manchester's nightlife history. Stepping down to the dining room pulsing with dance music recalls a basement club. Having to read the short menu of British and French classics via phone torchlight is probably not the intended experience, but local chef Gabe Lea keeps his promise of seasonal, ingredient-led cooking.

Such hyper-seasonality was no doubt drilled into him by former employers The French, also in Manchester, and the field-grown rhubarb cuts through a richly gamey roasted squab starter. The Wye Valley asparagus, meanwhile, is a natural bed for the adeptly cooked salt marsh lamb. And the hand-dived Orkney scallop tartare tastes ultra fresh.

Yet the food doesn't always feel the star of Maya's show; loud chatter from the circular centrepiece bar sings more than the vegetarian dish — a slightly one-note beetroot tart with horseradish and an onion topping.

Where the menu gets quirkier the potential seems clear. I end with a fantastic pear tatin drenched in calvados caramel. It's a brilliant twist on a toffee apple, confirming that if all the dishes were this ambitious, Maya could indeed be a unique Manchester experience. *Three-course meal for two around £135; wine from £36 a bottle. Ben East*

IMAGES: SETH CARNILL; SMOKE; MAYA; GILLES DRAPS

OMA

LONDON • OMA.LONDON

Greece is the word for David Carter (founder of Manteca and Smokestak) whose new souvla spot, Agora in Borough Market, now has an upstairs neighbour: classy sister venture, Oma. All polished concrete and picture windows, this welcoming venue has VIP vibes with booth seating and a terrace above the market. Its 450-plus wine list is inspired by the sea, skirting Greek, Med, Iberian and UK shores: a brilliant voyage of discovery, notably for Greek wines, and the backdrop to a multi-course menu of reimagined Aegean classics.

Charred squid skewers are delicate, golden with za'atar, while the salt-cod labneh, slick with spicy XO sauce, is near-face-plantingly moreish. Chilled earthenware bowls of crudo offer a cool counterpoint to garlicky wood-fired breads and yoghurt-rich spreads, the chalkstream trout tartare with datterini tomato a zingy, citrus-dressed standout. Fava, crispy capers and soft-boiled egg will surely be a brunch hit — perfect with a pol-OMA cocktail: tequila, grapefruit and lemongrass, popsicle-coloured with rhubarb. The oxtail giouvetsi, orzo with bone marrow is unctuous and impossible to top, perhaps, until the salted, olive oil ice cream. Confident, classy cooking that feels like going on the hip holiday of a lifetime. *10-plate dinner for two around £130 including wine. Sarah Barrell*

EAT & STAY

GILPIN HOTEL

WINDERMERE, CUMBRIA • THEGILPIN.CO.UK

THE LUXURY SPA HOTEL'S MICHELIN-STARRED SOURCE RESTAURANT BRINGS A PLAYFUL TWIST TO FINE DINING

When I read the words 'our gin and tonic' on the menu at Source, I know this isn't going to be a simple aperitif. After all, chef Ollie Bridgwater spent almost a decade working under Heston Blumenthal at The Fat Duck, so I wouldn't be surprised if he'd picked up some of his old boss's tricks. And indeed he has — when the 'G&Ts' arrive, they're not drinks at all, but green spheres so delicate they're practically trembling in the spoons used to serve them. When I scoop mine into my mouth it bursts under the lightest pressure, flooding my palate with fresh, herbal flavours.

Yet, Source — one of two restaurants at Windermere's luxurious Gilpin Hotel — is more than a Fat Duck tribute act. Since arriving here in early 2023, Bridgwater has overhauled the restaurant and retained its Michelin star with his own tasting menu of refined dishes celebrating local, seasonal and sustainable ingredients. The homemade bread is so sweet, soft and fluffy I'm grateful my dining companion is gluten-free, as I'm 'forced' to polish it all off myself. The smoked chawanmushi — a savoury custard — with tomato and citrussy ponzu sauce packs in plenty of flavour and comes dotted with leaves from the hotel's own vertical farm. Another dish of lightly torched cuboids of mackerel and pieces of pickled cucumber swims in a pool of tangy, green tiger's milk marinade.

There are a couple of minor missteps. A hunk of cod, served with broad beans and borlotti, is perfectly cooked, falling apart under my fork, but the lemongrass bisque it sits in is a touch oversalted. And while my friend enjoys a beautifully pink piece of venison, my non-meat alternative is textures of tenderstem, which has plenty of umami flavour but is a little unexciting. However, these are small gripes that are soon forgotten.

After dinner it's time to retire. There are double rooms in the main building, but we're in a Spa Suite, a few minutes' walk away. Each of these boxy, modern cabins comes with its own sauna, steam room and treatment room, plus a private deck with a hot tub and water feature, should the ramble over to Lake Windermere not appeal. Inside, you can cosy up in front of the fire, or simply sit back and survey your kingdom through the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Six-course tasting menu £90 per person; wine from £32 a bottle. Doubles from £335; Spa Suites from £960, both B&B. Nicola Trup

Lake District highlights

WILD SWIMMING: You can swim in most of the lakes, but for peace, quiet and safety, pick one that doesn't allow motorboats. Grasmere and Rydal Water are among the smallest and shallowest, so the water tends to be warmer.

HIKING: The Lakes are a walker's paradise, whether you'd like to scale Scafell Pike — England's highest mountain — or amble from Gilpin Hotel to Windermere, across gently undulating fields and woods.

PUBS: Among the best pubs in the area are the Brown Horse Inn, a traditional Georgian coaching inn in Winster, and the appropriately named Wateredge Inn in Ambleside, with its beer garden right on the shore.

IMAGES: ANDRE AINSWORTH; TONY WEST

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Recipe

Method

1. Prepare your spice blend of paprika, cumin and chilli powder.
2. In a frying pan heat the oil and add the finely chopped onions, cook until softened and slightly coloured.
3. Add the ground garlic and spice blend, stir until all liquid has evaporated.
4. Place beef mince into a bowl and add the onion, garlic & spice blend. Mix well together.
5. Heat a griddle pan or frying pan or BBQ to very hot. Brush patties with oil and cook on each side for 3-4 minutes. When flipping the burger over, fry or grill the halloumi slice.
6. Serve your burgers in a bun and build your garnish, **pour a glass of Pepperbox Shiraz and enjoy!**

Ingredients

PATTY

1. 1 tbsp olive oil
2. 800g beef mince
3. 1 large onion, finely chopped
4. 2 garlic cloves, ground into a paste

SPICE BLEND

5. ½ tsp smoked paprika
6. 2 tsp of ground cumin
7. 1 tsp mild chilli powder

GARNISH

8. 2 tbsp chopped fresh coriander
9. Gherkins
10. Red onions
11. Grilled Halloumi

OTHER

12. 4-6 brioche burger buns

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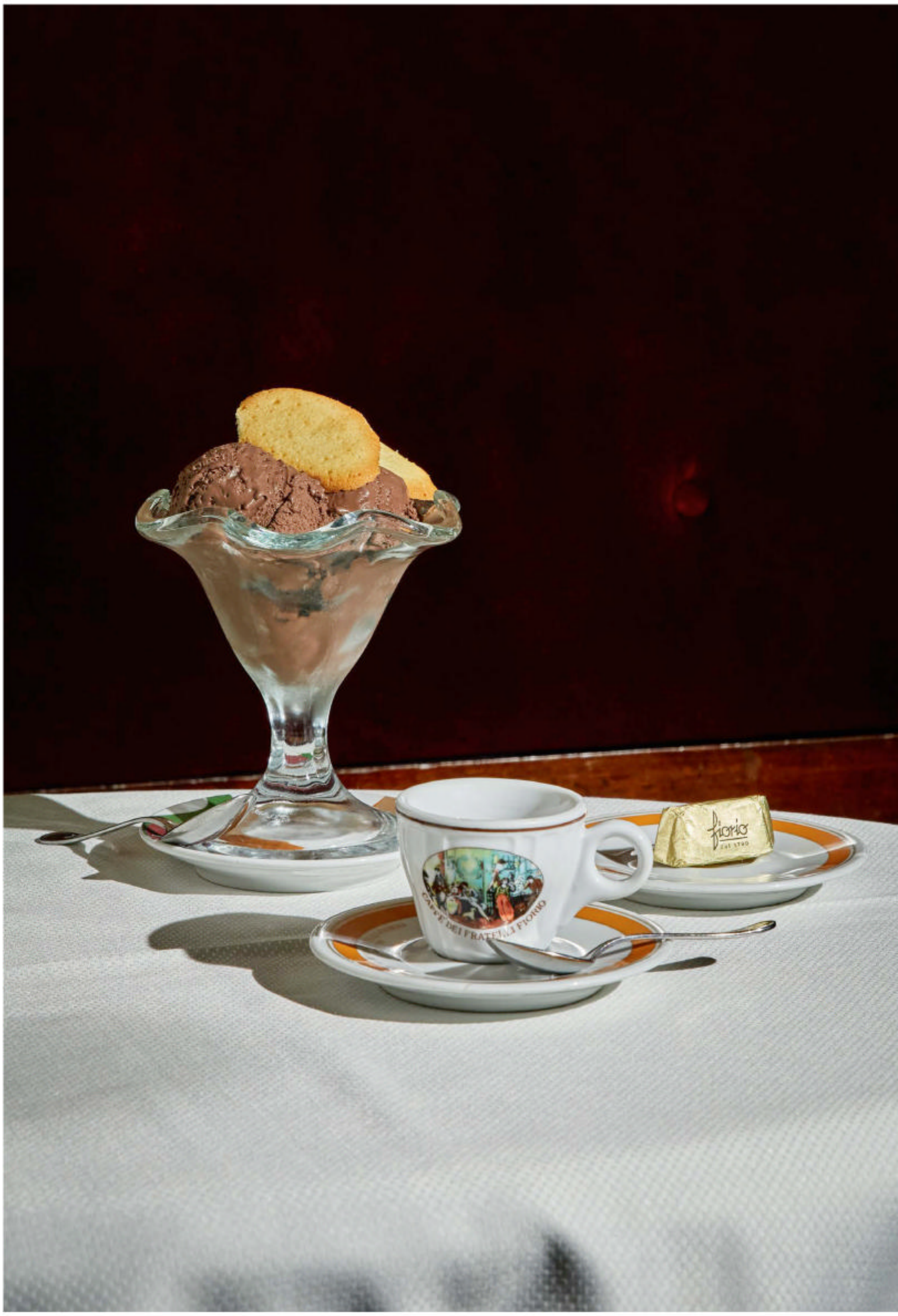
TURIN

HOW I GOT THE SHOT

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHER SIMON BAJADA ON CAPTURING CHOCOLATE AND HAZELNUT GELATO IN TURIN FOR OUR AUTUMN 2023 ISSUE



What's the most important thing to consider when photographing food?
Most of the time, food tends to look best with soft, natural light, so I try to find places that delivers this. It's also important to work quickly — the longer food sits out, the more tired it looks. This is why it helps to envision what you want and be ready when the food arrives. For this shot, I only had a few minutes before the dessert melted. I shot around 20 frames, some landscape, some portrait. I'd had a big lunch before and felt bad for not eating all the gelato afterwards!

What settings did you use to get a blacked-out background like this?
There was little to no natural light in Caffè Fiorio, so I set up a small pocket flash. I angled the light in such a way that it lit the dessert and the light fell off the background. Luckily it was very quiet that day so I could work the flash without disturbing too many diners.

Did you have a composition in mind before taking this photo?
Gelato is always tricky, but I'd worked out the right settings and composition just before it came, so it felt good. Generally anything tall — in this case a coupe glass — photographs well from a low angle, so as soon as I saw the gelato I knew I'd shoot it like this. I also had a feeling it could work well as an opening image given the amount of negative space the framing left above the picture [allowing space for a headline].

How important were the props?
Cafes like this, that have a lot of history, always provide the goods. Quite often, their tableware has been the same for decades and some places have interesting branding on cups and plates. I think props are especially important as they lend to a sense of place — too mundane and you could be anywhere.

View the full photo story at
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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
TRAVELLER
FOOD
West Africa

West Africa is home to a vibrant cuisine that varies from area to area and family to family, with dishes like egusi soup and red red among its most distinctive. Savour the flavours of Ghana, Nigeria and beyond and meet the chefs putting the region's cooking on the map

PLUS ROMANIA, BEEF WELLINGTON, LOS ANGELES, LITHUANIA, ISTANBUL, LIECHTENSTEIN, NUT-BASED DISHES & MORE

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ON THE TABLE

What we've been enjoying in the world of food and travel

I'VE BEEN EATING AT…

UBA, in Shoreditch, London, where the menu is a homage to the flavours of East Asia. While I loved the Korean crispy fried chicken, it was the seared salmon belly maki with prawn that stole the show. *Farida Zeynalova, assistant editor*

What's the most unusual gelato flavour you've ever tried?

PASSIONFRUIT CHEESECAKE IN FLORENCE
Bought within sight of the Uffizi Gallery, this really delivered a medley of wonderful flavours. *Glen Mutel, editor*

BLACK GARLIC IN SORRENTO
It's something of an acquired taste, but black garlic ice cream worked for me. I'd happily eat several scoops on a hot day. *FZ*

BREAD IN SARDINIA
I found this on a menu in Porto Rotondo. It had such a distinctly bready taste I half-expected to find crumbs in my bowl. *Angela Locatelli, contributing editor*

I'VE BEEN GROWING…

Lion's mane mushrooms, using a kit from Merryhill Mushrooms. The ideal meat substitute, these fluffy fungi are so easy to grow — they just need a couple of weeks indoors surrounded by damp paper towels. *Nicola Trup, deputy editor*

MERRYHILL MUSHROOMS

I'VE BEEN DRINKING…

Exeter Gin. Available in new 500ml pouches, it comes in varieties such as Ivaar the Boneless Navy Strength and Grandad's Allotment rhubarb flavour. You can even blend your own botanicals by the sea at the distillery's tasting room in Teignmouth, Devon. *Sarah Barrell, senior editor*

I'VE BEEN MAKING…

Dorset apple cake. Dating back to the 19th century, this is the easiest and best apple cake recipe I've come across. It doesn't require an electric mixer and somehow tastes like crumble in cake form. It's flavoured with cinnamon, chunks of apple and demerara sugar on top. *Maria Pieri, editorial director*

THREE TO TRY

European culinary festivals

1 Copenhagen Cooking
A 10-day celebration of Danish gastronomy with chefs, restaurants and producers. 16-25 August.

2 Budapest Wine Festival
Taste the best of Hungarian wine atop Buda Castle. 12-15 September.

3 Seafood Festival, O Grove
Thousands descend on Galicia's O Grove peninsula for fresh seafood and cooking demonstrations. 3-13 October.

IMAGES: FRESH MIKE STUDIO; MERRYHILL MUSHROOMS; GETTY

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